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Management and Mismanagement of the King's Forests

**Social status, professional practice and corruption of
mid-ranking forestry officers in the Pyrenean district of Quillan
(1670s to 1740s)**

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PhD in History

Birkbeck, University of London

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Elisabeth Salje

ABSTRACT

In traditional accounts, Colbert's sweeping forestry reforms of the 1660s and 1670s were seen as the epitome of the centralising modernising 'absolutist' state. Six decades later, the legal framework that he had established appeared superseded by practices that embodied another set of classic views of ancien régime institutions: dysfunctional and corrupt. This study of mid-ranking forestry officers of a Pyrenean forestry district at the beginning of the eighteenth century deconstructs these orthodoxies.

The establishment of Colbert's new-style forestry institutions in small towns like Quillan proved, ultimately, to be a mixed blessing for their officers. The forestry office might offer professional stability and social prestige, but its *gages* were hardly sufficient to support their place among the urban oligarchies. A narrow legal specialism and lack of promotion opportunities drove them instead to strengthen existing ties with successful local wood merchants, with whom they professionally cooperated. This generated a highly ambiguous situation because of the inherent risk of collusion and abuse of power. In 1736, excessive misuse of this symbiotic system triggered a *Réformation Forestière* in the forestry district of Quillan. Analysis of the judicial part of this high-profile governmental intervention uncovered two thought-provoking biases: a clear pro-merchant stance, and the absence of political commitment to contain endemic 'corruption' within its ranks.

There was more to this tolerant attitude than political pragmatism giving priority to stability over disruption. Outwardly, *Réformations* were an authority-enhancing exercise in public visibility, re-affirming Colbert's forestry code as a valid, central frame of reference. Behind this façade, the authorities were happy to apply a decentralised and more effective approach to ordinary forestry business, under the loose watch of the regional head. This allowed *maîtrises* to continue operating smoothly, regional economies to be kept supplied, and yearly returns from wood sales to flow into the royal coffers.

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Abbreviations

ADH	Archives Départementales de l'Hérault (Montpellier)
ADAD	Archives Départementales de l'Aude (Carcassonne)
ADHG	Archives Départementales de Haute-Garonne (Toulouse)
AN	Archives Nationales (Paris)
BN	Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris)
BL	British Library (London)
BMT	Bibliothèque Municipale Toulouse

CHAPTER ONE

EARLY MODERN FORESTRY BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE, A HISTORIOGRAPHY

A revealing incident

In 1736, the *intendant* of Languedoc Louis-Basile Bernage de Saint Maurice subdelegated an *avocat* of the Toulouse *Parlement*, Jean Rouquet, to help investigating serious allegations of malpractice and corruption in the Pyrenean forestry district of Quillan. Their inquiries started with hearing statements of all the officers who had worked at the *maîtrise* between 1721 and 1736. Urged on by Rouquet, former deputy head André Boire recounted the extraordinary sequence of events that had occurred back in 1722 after he and two other officers, *procureur du Roy* Pinet de Brézilhau and *garde-marteau* Estienne Loubet, had identified a load of timber as misappropriated from one of the royal forests upstream. As the three officers met at Loubet's house to discuss further action, a heated dispute ensued. The rightful action would have been to issue a joint formal report, but Loubet refused pointblank. Pressed by his colleagues he eventually admitted having used the royal seal 'abusively'. When *lieutenant* Boire exclaimed "vous êtes donc le maistre des forêts du Roy!" Loubet replied "je n'ai pu m'empêcher de le faire sur les fortes sollicitations de cette proserpine madame de Rouzaud."¹ The *Proserpine* in question was the widow of Jean Rouzaud, the former head of the local *maîtrise particulière* of Quillan.² Boire insisted on reporting the case, but Loubet turned violent. "Si tu verbalises, et si tu veux exiger que je verbalise je te tueray", at which point "il prit un tranche-lart qui estoit sur la table et voulut se jeter sur le répondant." Things would probably have taken a turn for the worse, had it not been for the swift intervention of *procureur* Pinet.

Due care must be taken with testimonies such as these. The scene so vividly depicted here might have been embellished over time or coloured by personal enmity or partisanship. On the other hand, independent statements broadly corroborated the alleged facts. More important than the accuracy of Boire's account are the assumptions that underlay it. Loubet's refusal to report stolen wood hints at some form of connivance with a local wood

¹ All quotes from ADH, C1255, f.320-321, 'Audition personnelle du Sr Boire, 26 octobre 1737'.

² By referring to the Greek goddess Persephone, Loubet probably alluded to her seasonal association with the shadowy underworld.

merchant, and his outburst about Madame Rouzaud reveals the leverage that an outsider was able to exert over officers in the course of their official duties. Most importantly, this brief extract encapsulates the close interlinkage between private interests and official circuits of power, a fundamental feature of early modern institutions. The level of verbal and physical violence it suggests is a reflection of the strength of the emotions generated by conflicting allegiances.

What, fundamentally, connects these themes is the overarching issue of royal authority, “la pierre angulaire de la monarchie.”³ In early modern France, respect for royal authority and its diffusion throughout society underpinned the success of all monarchical interventions in provincial affairs. The way intermediate royal institutions like the *maîtrises particulières* translated centrally-emitted measures into practice - the main theme of this thesis - is a revealing indicator of the nature of the relationship between the political centre and the provinces. Royal authority and centre-periphery relations were critical issues in the multipolar revisionist debate, which in the last decades of the twentieth century challenged the long-established orthodoxies of ‘absolutism’, a concept that is still contentious today. Fanny Cosandey and Robert Descimon for example underscored the importance of incorporating theoretical underpinnings into historical interpretations. As a theory of legislative power derived from Roman law, they argued, the concept of absolutism was relayed during the Renaissance by jurists like Jean Bodin, who used theology as the “matrice de la pensée politique.”⁴ Here, the monarch by divine right was deemed the legitimate source of all positive law. In the course of the seventeenth century, a secularised form of this concept developed the notion of “raison d’Etat”, partly detached from its religious anchorage. The state apparatus that emerged was based on practices of ‘absolute’ royal power, but its consolidation depended on increasing levels of administrative rationality.

Moving away from the concept of a centralising, modernising monarchy intruding authoritatively into provincial power structures, other strands of thought developed. They were based on empirical approaches, and the study of the day-to-day reality of the relations between monarchical institutions and groups wielding alternative forms of power in the provinces, such as the *Parlements*, the *Etats*, the nobility, or the municipalities. They underscored notions of “compromise, negotiation and sharing of resources in a manner

³ Michel Antoine, *Louis XV* (Paris, 1989), 180.

⁴ Fanny Cosandey, Robert Descimon, *L’Absolutisme en France* (Paris, 2002), 48.

which maintained and supported hierarchical differences.”⁵ In the introduction to his study of the Burgundian Estates, Julian Swann provided a helpful discussion of this powerful challenge to classic absolutist theses.⁶ By focusing on the human complexities of *Ancien Régime* societies, cultural approaches within this movement have especially enriched classic views on absolutism. Peter Campbell even argued that *Parlementaire* studies were moving towards a “nouvelle *histoire totale* des magistrats, qui est à la fois sociale, économique, culturelle, anthropologique, linguistique et politique.”⁷ In its wide diversity, this new paradigm completely redefined the conceptual framework of power relations in early modern societies.

A number of themes central to this revisionist scholarship have also shaped the main lines of our research. The pivotal issue of venality was especially relevant for the financial status, local prestige and promotion facilities associated with the forestry office.⁸ *Officier-moyen* studies have guided our analysis of the networks and patronage patterns, in particular those connecting mid-ranking royal foresters to the local urban elites. Finally, our examination of the officers’ professional practices and the responses they elicited from the government drew on the insights of cultural historians interested in practices such as patronage and gift-giving, and on the emerging research on corruption as a historical concept. Before developing more fully the way these various historiographical debates have influenced this research, I will first introduce the general context and broad chronological evolution that framed the processes that I propose to analyse.

⁵ William Beik, ‘The Absolutism of Louis XIV as Social Collaboration’, *Past & Present*, 188 (2005), pp. 195-225, 195.

⁶ Julian Swann, *Provincial Power and Absolute Monarchy. The Estates General of Burgundy 1661-1790* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 2-18. Other helpful guides to the absolutist debate also in Peter Campbell, *Power and Politics in Old Regime France, 1720-1745* (London, New York, 1996), 10-35 ; Joël Cornette, ‘L’histoire au travail, le nouveau “siècle de Louis XIV” : un bilan historiographique depuis vingt ans (1980-2000)’, *Histoire, Economie & Société*, 19 (2000), pp. 561-605; 607-620; Michael Breen, *Law, City, and King: Legal culture, municipal politics and State formation in early modern Dijon* (Rochester, New York, 2007), pp. 17-25.

⁷ Peter Campbell, ‘Crises « politiques » et parlements : pour une micro-histoire des crises parlementaires au XVIIIe siècle,’ *Histoire, économie & société*, 1 (2012), pp. 69-91, 73.

⁸ Especially Roland Mousnier, *La vénalité des offices sous Henri IV et Louis XIII* (Paris, 1971); William Doyle, *Venality: the sale of offices in eighteenth-century France* (Oxford, 1996); Jean Nagle, *Un orgueil français. La vénalité des offices sous l’Ancien Régime* (Paris, 2008).

The kingdom's forests and its foresters

In the pre-industrial 'wooden age,'⁹ forests and wood represented a crucial material resource for the kingdom. They were central to the development of a wood-based economy. They furnished the navy and military with construction material,¹⁰ and provided fuel material for manufactures like metal works, glass works or salt works. They were also a factor of social peace and economic development, by warranting the sustainable and affordable provision of fuel and construction material for fast growing metropolises, towns and villages. For many rural communities, they represented important resources in the form of firewood-collecting and forest-grazing grounds for their flocks. Forestry politics was all about foresight and prevention of what historians described as a 'wood crisis', understood as a critical depletion of ligneous resources – perceived or real - and a corresponding rise of wood prices. In France, after three decades of conflict and administrative problems, reports of a looming supply crisis due to the degradation in many forests and acute administrative malfunction caused Colbert in 1661 to initiate a series of sweeping forestry reforms in every province of the realm.

After initial successes, the hoped-for improvement was not sustained over the long term. At the dawn of the new century, cautious comments by royal engineer Vauban, followed by more vocal criticisms from natural scientists like Réaumur, Buffon, and especially Duhamel du Monceau (who was also *inspecteur général de la Marine*), brought the debate into the public domain.¹¹ In Languedoc, the situation was especially critical because of the unfavourable convergence of climatic, geographical, demographic and economic factors. Thirty years after Colbert's initiative, *intendant* Lamoignon de Basville's brief descriptions of the Sault forests in the Pyrenean Alet *diocèse* suggested at best a mitigated outcome. While they were sufficiently furnished with firs "pour servir à l'Etat quand la nécessité le demandera," the forests which had been earmarked for the building of long galley oars for

⁹ A term coined by economic historian Werner Sombart, *Der Moderne Kapitalismus* (Leipzig, 1902).

¹⁰ According to P.W. Bamford, *Forests and French sea power, 1660 - 1789* (Toronto, 1956), 9, in the eighteenth century, the building of just one first-rate ship of the line required more than 4,000 oaks and a considerable quantity of other woods.

¹¹ Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban, 'Traité de la culture des forêts' in: *Les oisivetés de monsieur de Vauban* (Seyssel, 2007) first edition 1701; René-Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur, *Réflexions sur l'état des bois du Royaume*, Mémoires de l'Académie des Sciences, (Paris, 1721); G.L. Leclerc de Buffon, *Mémoire sur la conservation et le rétablissement des forêts* (Paris, 1739); on Henri-Louis Duhamel du Monceau, see Jérôme Buridant, 'Duhamel du Monceau et la crise forestière du XVIII^e siècle', in: Jérôme Buridant, *Duhamel du Monceau, un Européen du siècle des Lumières* (Orléans, 2001) pp. 41-54.

the Mediterranean arsenals had all been “détruites & épuisées.”¹² In 1725, the supply situation of the regional capital Toulouse was worrying enough to be discussed at the *Etats*. This sparked a series of ordinances and *arrêts du Parlement*, which remained however without much effect.¹³ By the last decades of the century, mounting agricultural malaise, industrial stagnation, and commercial disasters resulted in fast rising wood prices in the region. In 1788, *intendant* Ballainvilliers warned: “Il y a une disette effrayante. Le dépérissement des bois se fait sentir depuis près d’un siècle. [...] On est réduit à acheter le bois à un prix exorbitant [...] dans les villes; les paysans n’ont de ressource que dans l’émondage des arbres, le bois mort, les sarments et les arbustes qu’ils arrachent dans la garrigue.”¹⁴ The exceptional rise of the price of wood has been amply demonstrated, even if historians disagreed on the accuracy of the figures. According to Ernest Labrousse, the average price of firewood between 1771 and 1789 was 63 % higher than the reference period of 1726-1741, and 91 % for 1785 – 1789 years alone.¹⁵

In other provinces, similarly bleak assessments emerged. The “Grande enquête sur les bois” instigated by the ministry in 1771 exposed the disorders of *main-morte* woods.¹⁶ In 1776, navy commissioner Sr. Flamenq deplored that in Bourgogne, “[l]es forêts appartenantes au Roy, celles des ecclésiastiques, gens de mainmorte, communautés, habitants de Parroisses et des particuliers touchent à leur destruction presque totale; non seulement par rapport aux bois propres à la construction de vaisseaux du Roy [...] mais encore à l’usage des bâtimens civils et pour le chauffage.”¹⁷ In the 1780s, a series of reports by the influential *grand-maître* of Champagne, Antoine Telles d’Acosta, raised alarm about the disastrous situation of urban and industrial wood provisioning. Most

¹² Nicolas Lamoignon de Basville, *Mémoires pour servir à l’Histoire de Languedoc* (Amsterdam, 1736), 22. This publication is based on Basville’s compilation of 1697.

¹³ *Etats* session of 6 February 1725. See Léon Dutil, *L’état économique du Languedoc à la fin de l’ancien régime* (Paris, 1911), esp. chapitre V, ‘Les Bois’, pp. 213-217.

¹⁴ Charles Bernard, baron de Ballainvilliers, *Mémoires sur le Languedoc ; (suivis du) Traité sur le commerce en Languedoc* (Montpellier, 1789), first publ. 1788, quoted in: Dutil, *L’état économique*, 214.

¹⁵ Ernest Labrousse, *Esquisse du mouvement des prix et des revenus en France au XVIIIe siècle*, 2 vols (Paris, 1984), first publ. 1933. See especially vol.1, 343-348. For a critique of Labrousse’s results, see for example Jérôme Buridant, ‘Croissance industrielle et demande énergétique. Le cas du bois (XVIIIe-XIXe siècles) in: François Duceppe-Lamarre and Jens Ivo Engels (eds), *Umwelt und Herrschaft in der Geschichte* (Walter de Gruyter, 2008), pp. 92-105.

¹⁶ Gille Bertrand, *Les sources statistiques de l’histoire de France* (Genève, 1980).

¹⁷ AN, G3, 13, f.61r., *Mémoire et Observations sur l’Etat actuel des forêts...* (12 décembre 1776).

alarmingly, after the harsh winter of 1783-84, acute wood shortage threatened an already restless capital.¹⁸

For Michel Devèze, the spiralling needs of a fast developing population and economy were primary causes for crippling shortages and rocketing wood prices. For this forestry historian, they combined with the other “crises” of the last decades of the century to become “collectivement responsables de la Révolution.”¹⁹ In Languedoc, Edward Allen reached a similar conclusion. In that fragile physical environment, the acceleration of deforestation after the 1760s not only destroyed in many places what little forest was left, but it might even have “formed an important factor in the development of revolutionary emotions in the winter of 1788-1789.”²⁰ On the other hand, the conflation of wood-supply problems into one single undifferentiated crisis has been challenged. More precise analyses of wood consumption figures led economic historians to distinguish between regions, or between the various end consumers, the manufactures, the navy, or the populations of the cities or the country.²¹ Even the detailed description of individual forests in Ballainvilliers’ annexe mitigates the alarmist message in his main text, as they still appeared to be relatively abundant in some mountainous *diocèses* of Languedoc. At a more conceptual level, the idea that socio-economic factors (like catastrophic wood shortage) could trigger the fall of the ‘absolute monarchy’ is, however, a matter of debate for historians who prefer to stress the role of the political culture of leading elites marked by strife and factionalism.²²

¹⁸ Antoine Telles d’Acosta, *Second supplément à l’instruction sur les bois de marine...* (Paris, 1786).

¹⁹ Michel Devèze, ‘Les forêts françaises à la veille de la Révolution de 1789’, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 13 (1966), pp. 241-272, 241. See also id., *La crise forestière en France dans la première moitié du 18e siècle et les suggestions de Vauban, Réaumur, Buffon*, Actes du 88e congrès des sociétés savantes (Clermont-Ferrand, 1963) pp. 595-616; Louis Mazoyer, ‘Exploitation forestière et conflits sociaux en Franche-Comté à la fin de l’ancien régime,’ *Annales d’histoire économique et sociale*, IV, 16 (1932), pp. 339-358.

²⁰ Edward Allen, ‘Deforestation and Fuel Crisis in Pre-Revolutionary Languedoc, 1720-1789’, *French Historical Studies*, 13, 4, (1984), pp. 455-473, 457.

²¹ See for example David Bruce Young, ‘A Wood Famine? The Question of Deforestation in Old Regime France’, *Forestry*, 49,1 (1976), pp. 45-56; Joachim Radkau, ‘Holzverknappung und Krisenbewußtsein’, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 9 (1983), pp. 513-543; R.C. Allen, ‘Was there a timber crisis in Early Modern Europe?’ in: Simonetta Cavaciocchi, *Economia e energia, secc.XIII-XVIII* (Florence, 2003), pp. 469-482.

²² See for example William Doyle, *Origins of the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1980); Peter Jones, *The peasantry in the French Revolution* (Cambridge 1988), esp. pp. 30-59; more recently, Julian Swann, and Joël Felix, eds., *The crisis of the absolute monarchy: from the old regime to the French Revolution* (Oxford, 2013).

Still, in the course of century, as observations of natural scientists increasingly seeped into the public domain, the idea of a *crise du bois* appeared increasingly as an established notion. After the Seven-years war, among literate observers, criticisms also changed nature, acquiring a clearer political edge. New ideas about forest management emerged. Reformers of the 1760s and 1770s repeatedly attempted to suppress the regulative drive enshrined in *Eaux-et-Forêts* legislation, and transfer the management and control of the forests altogether to state contractors, or even private owners.²³ The need for a thorough refoundation of official forestry was discussed during the first *Assemblée des Notables* of 1787, but it ended without reaching a concrete outcome on that matter. Finally, with his edict of May 1788, justice minister Lamoignon hit at the heart of the forestry institution when he suppressed all those “tribunaux d’exceptions [qui] gênent, embarrassent et ralentissent la marche de la justice.”²⁴ This re-assigned the judicial competencies of the forestry institution to the *présidiaux* and *bailliage* courts. A loud call for reform also resonated throughout the *cahiers de doléances* of 1789, where *maîtrises particulières* were perceived as a source of abuse, unnecessary expense, and oppression. For the authors of the *cahiers* of Ardiège (Saint-Gaudens), the “vexations inouïes que les maîtrises des eaux et forêts et leurs suppôts exercent contre les communautés” had become intolerable.²⁵

France’s woes were not unique. Similar problems plagued all rulers of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Europe, albeit with varying degrees of severity.²⁶ In a revealing symmetry, the first edition of John Evelyn’s “*Sylva*” in 1664 coincided with the start of Colbert’s *Grandes Réformations Forestières*, a substantial, nation-wide series of operations that completely overhauled France’s forestry in the 1660s and 1670s. In counterpart to the catchphrase attributed to Colbert “la France périra faute de bois”, the earl of Carnarvon quipped that wood was “an excrescence of the earth provided by God for the payment of debts.”²⁷ Whether for the survival of a whole nation or for individual profit, questions of wood supplies and forest management were universal concerns of early modern European states. In France, all these criticisms, in their diverse manifestations, targeted fundamentally one core feature of the royal administration: the monopoly of the

²³ For a synthesis of the political crisis leading to the institution’s demise of 1788, see Jean-Claude Waquet, *Les Grands Maîtres des Eaux et Forêts de France de 1689 à la Révolution* (Genève, Paris, 1978), pp. 303-321.

²⁴ AN, AD IV/15, *Mémoire sur la Réformation...*, (1789, page 26), f.17.

²⁵ F.Pasquier et F.Galabert, *Cahiers paroissiaux des sénéchaussées de Toulouse et de Comminges en 1789* (Toulouse, 1925). Quoted in Waquet, *Les Grands Maîtres*, 300, n.39.

²⁶ A good survey is in Paul Warde, ‘Fear of Wood Shortage and the Reality of the Woodland in Europe, c. 1450-1850’, *History Workshop Journal*, 62 (2006), pp. 28-57.

²⁷ Aphorism attributed to the Earl of Carnarvon, quoted in Pepys Diary, entry 5.May 1667.

monarchical state over the management and control of a crucial and increasingly scarce material resource, wood.

This monopoly was rooted in a centuries-old process. Given its strategic and economic importance, it is not surprising that at all times princes and rulers sought to exercise and expand jurisdictional and administrative control over this resource. In France, the *Eaux-et-Forêts* institution (in its eighteenth-century guise) was established by Henri III in 1575. He covered the territory with a grid of clearly delineated forestry districts, operated by a hierarchically organised, fast-growing body of office-holders. Subsequently, there were several attempts at reducing the number of these offices, notably by Henri IV and Jean-Baptiste Colbert.²⁸ All failed, mainly because of the lack of funds to reimburse their holders.²⁹

After a second major reconfiguration in 1689, the official forestry map remained broadly unchanged until the Revolution.³⁰ It comprised eighteen regional *grandes maîtrises* headed by a *grand-maître*, further subdivided in approximately 120 *maîtrises particulières* and smaller units, the *grueries*.³¹ *Maîtrises particulières* were at once lower courts and administrative centres for a given geographical district. In that district, the king's forests were patrolled by fluctuating numbers of salaried *gardes* directly answerable to the *grand-maître*.³² Colbert reduced the core personnel of each *maîtrise* to a skeleton staff, which comprised the head of the *maîtrise* (*maître particulier*), one *lieutenant*, one *procureur du Roy*, one *garde-marteau* and one or two clerks (*greffiers*). These mid-ranking officials operated at the juncture between the upper echelons of the forestry hierarchy - the *Contrôle Général*, *Table de Marbre*, and regional *grand-maître* - and the subjects who owned, or used, the forests situated in the *maîtrise*.

This group of officers was an essential component of the crown's administrative and judicial forestry apparatus, and it is remarkable they have not attracted more

²⁸ See William Doyle, 'Colbert et les offices', *Histoire, Économie & Société*, 4 (2000), pp. 469-480.

²⁹ More details on Colbert's action regarding the forestry office in chapter two.

³⁰ See Map 8 below, p.99.

³¹ According to Waquet, *Les Grands Maîtres*, 216, there were 124 *maîtrises* in 1720, and 151 in 1789.

³² An edict of November 1689 erected *gardes* posts as offices, but there is some confusion about their status after 1719, when they should have officially returned to salaried status. See Roger Blais, 'Contribution à une histoire des gardes forestiers au XVIIIe siècle', *Revue Forestière Française*, 38 (1986), pp. 17-26, 18.

historiographical attention. It will be seen that reasons for this lacuna are linked to the persistence of hardened views of a forestry scholarship narrowly focused on the Colbertian legacy. The forestry regime he established fits particularly neatly within the mould of classic representations of 'absolutism'. Especially in French historiography, this acted as a bulwark against revisionist ideas, which from late twentieth century were upturning orthodoxies of a Paris-based, modernising administrative apparatus, whose predatory interventionism triumphed over the diminished vitality of representative institutions or leading professional groups in the provinces.

Forestry and 'absolutism'

Following critical analyses of historians like Roger Mettam or Peter Campbell,³³ the revisionist paradigm developed out of the fundamental belief that power in the past was better understood from the point of view of its actual functioning than from its structures. For Campbell, the state apparatus was not simply the materialisation of royal will. Instead, "it benefited from a great deal of consensus and co-operation from society, particularly in the realm of justice as arbitration."³⁴ Studies based on *pays d'états* like Languedoc, Burgundy or Brittany did much to buttress these views.³⁵ Instead of the confrontational stance opposing a dominant Parisian power base to disintegrating provincial institutions, Swann's research, for example, depicted a sophisticated balancing act performed by the *Etats*, reconciling demands of the crown and those of the people who placed their faith in them. A similar emphasis on negotiation, convergence of interests and 'social collaboration' was also at the core of William Beik's influential study of seventeenth-century Languedoc elites. While these works were concerned with elites and large institutions, other historians also focused on the middle rungs of society and institutions, highlighting the agency of intermediate 'power brokers' in the context of their immediate social, cultural and political environment.³⁶

³³ Roger Mettam, *Power and faction in Louis XIV's France* (Oxford, 1988); Campbell, *Power and Politics*, (1996).

³⁴ Campbell, *Power and Politics in Old Regime France, 1720-1745*, (London, New York, 1996) 14.

³⁵ William Beik, *Absolutism and Society in Seventeenth-Century France. State Power and Provincial Aristocracy in Languedoc* (Cambridge, 1985); James Collins, *Classes, Estates and Order in Early Modern Brittany* (Cambridge, 1994); Swann, *Provincial Power*.

³⁶ In French scholarship the most representatives are: Jean Nagle, 'L'officier "moyen" dans l'espace français de 1568 à 1665, in: Jean-Philippe Genet, ed., *L'Etat moderne. Genèse, bilan et perspectives* (Paris, 1990), pp. 163-174; Michel Cassan, 'Pour une enquête sur les officiers "moyens" de la France moderne', *Annales du Midi*, 108, 213 (1996), pp. 89-112; Robert Descimon, e.a. (dirs.), *Les figures de l'administrateur. Institutions, réseaux, pouvoirs en Espagne, en France et au Portugal, XVIe-XIXe siècles* (Paris, 1997); Christophe Blanquie, *Justice et finance sous l'Ancien*

Scholarship of early modern French forestry, especially in its Colbertian phase, was written from a very different perspective. As the following section will outline, forestry literature remained long attached to classic narratives highlighting the efficacy and impact of *Réformations Forestières*. These high-profile events were presented as the hallmarks of monarchical centralisation and harbingers of a modernising forestry technocracy. By drawing mostly on state-led processes, discourses, and institutional or legal structures, accounts of early modern forestry administration ignored the transformative or disruptive potential of provincial operators. They disregarded the fact that the successful implementation of central policy was contingent on the loyal and effective cooperation of its agents in the provinces. Searching for explanations for the failure of the *Eaux-et-Forêts* to tackle the eighteenth-century wood crisis that emerged in spite of Colbert's promising reforms, forestry historians uncritically absorbed contemporary views about its officers. They were subsumed in general evaluations based on their venality, privileged status and propensity to negligent practice and corruption. Reasons for the staying power of these classic interpretations can be found in the perceived peculiar connection between the nation's forests and the monarchical state, which also legitimised their role as protector of this precious resource.

As the eye-catching representation of the *état de justice* in Charles de Figon's "*Arbre de justice*" suggests,³⁷ the notion of a centralised forestry department as a substantive part of the official state apparatus was already well established in sixteenth-century discourse. Wood resources constituted an important political, strategic and economic asset, and the nature and extent of the control exercised over them enhanced the glory and authority of the monarch. For Antoine Pecquet, *grand-maître* of Rouen under Louis XV, it was self-evident that "[L]a conservation des forêts devenait nécessairement liée avec l'intérêt de sa gloire et de celle de son état."³⁸ After the Revolution, this bond was further strengthened by nationalistic sentiment. Under the *Troisième République*, after decades of a potent combination of professionalisation, bureaucratisation and politicisation of national

Régime: la vénalité présidiale (Paris, 2001); Michel Cassan, dir., *Offices et officiers moyens en France à l'époque moderne, Profession, Culture* (Limoges, 2004); Vincent Meyzie, 'Les compagnies d'officiers "moyens" entre déplorations collectives et mobilisations corporatives au début du XVIIIe siècle', *French Historical Studies*, 35, 3 (2012), pp. 477-507.

³⁷ Charles Figon, *Discours des Etats et Offices tant du gouvernement que de la justice et des finances* (Paris, 1579). (Annexe 1).

³⁸ Quoted in Jacques-Joseph Baudrillart, *Traité Général des Eaux et Forêts, Chasses et Pêches*, 2 vols (Paris, 1821), vol.1, xvi.

forestry, a well-structured, assertive *corps forestier* emerged, more closely tied to the political centre than ever. After the defeat of 1871, the forestry personnel of the *République* became incorporated into the military system, for which they paid a high price in the First World War. The ideological character, which these developments imparted to the field, resonated in forestry narratives throughout the rest of the twentieth century.

What underpinned the evolution of forestry writing across the revolutionary divide was a continuing, explicit or implicit, reference to the Colbertian regime. In that sense, forestry is a good illustration of Fanny Cosandey and Robert Descimon's assertion that "la France a cette particularité rare d'avoir produit deux paradigmes majeurs d'identification politique: la monarchie absolue et la république, deux modèles antagonistes et successifs et donc liés intellectuellement."³⁹ In forestry literature, the Colbertian reference acted as a powerful political metaphor. France's forests had to be harnessed for the state's purposes, which consolidated the compelling notion that the long history of the forests, framed by a solid body of law, was "fortement couplée au centralisme d'Etat, véritable spécificité française."

⁴⁰ It was not until the last decades of the twentieth century that this approach started to be questioned, and that alternative interpretations were proposed. The following section will outline why the enduring fascination exercised by the Colbertian legacy in forestry matters so long prevented new approaches in forestry scholarship from emerging.

Colbert's legacy in forestry historiography

The early years of the nineteenth century saw relatively little scholarly interest in *ancien régime* forestry. Etienne-François Dralet and Jacques-Joseph Baudrillart followed the tradition of compiling and commenting legal texts,⁴¹ and one century later Edouard Decq explored pre-Renaissance forestry, mostly along the lines of classic institutional history.⁴² What particularly influenced the nineteenth-century approach to pre-revolutionary forestry was the fact that since the opening of France's first national forestry school in Nancy in 1824, forestry scholars were also trained practitioners. This technical slant coloured their

³⁹ Cosandey, Descimon, *L'Absolutisme*, 16.

⁴⁰ Sébastien Poulanc, *Compter les Arbres, : une histoire des forêts méridionales à l'époque moderne* (Thèse) (Toulouse, 2015), 11.

⁴¹ Etienne-François Dralet, *Traité du régime forestier, ou Analyse méthodique et raisonnée des arrêts, règlements, décisions, instructions et circulaires, concernant l'organisation des officiers et employés forestiers et la partie administrative de leurs fonctions* (Paris, 1812); Baudrillart, *Traité Général*, 1821.

⁴² Edouard Decq, 'L'administration des Eaux et Forêts dans le domaine royal en France aux XIVe et XVe siècles. Mémoire posthume', *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes*, 83 (1922), pp. 65-110; 331-361; 84 (1923) 92-115.

views of the performance of their predecessors. Leading this particular genre was Gustave Huffel, an influential high official of the *Eaux-et-Forêts* of the *Troisième République*. Huffel particularly deplored the longterm damage to the forests caused by the ill-advised silvicultural and organisational principles of his predecessors. Following the established tradition, he also duly denounced the negligence and corruption of the venal officers entrusted with their conservation.⁴³

In the ‘great-man-great-deed’ genre, *Réformation* commissioner and *grand-maître* Louis de Froidour was given centre stage. From relatively modest beginnings as a *lieutenant général civil et criminel au bailliage et maîtrise des eaux et forêts du comté de Marle et la Fère* (Picardie), Froidour soon became a *créature* of Colbert, and one of his star reformers. In 1666, he was sent to Languedoc to mastermind the forestry reforms in the south-west of the kingdom. After the end of the operation in 1673, he was rewarded with the post of *grand-maître* of Toulouse, which he retained until his death in 1685.⁴⁴ The rich hoard of administrative documents, ethnographical observations and epistolary works this elite forester left behind was rediscovered by regional historians of the *Troisième République*, and they continue to fascinate historians today.⁴⁵ For Froidour biographer and forestry historian Michel Bartoli, not only were his works on technical matters of considerable importance and influence, but he was also a keen and astute observer of rural practices and customs of the Pyrenean communities.⁴⁶ The narrow historiographical focus on this forestry personality, helped by accessible and well-structured archives, elevated Froidour to the rank of a cult figure. On the other hand, it obscured the reform work, political

⁴³ Gustave Huffel, *Les méthodes de l'aménagement forestier en France, étude historique* (Nancy, Paris, Strasbourg, 1927); id. *Description des Pyrénées, considérées principalement sous les rapports de la géologie, de l'économie politique, rurale et forestière, de l'industrie et du commerce* (Paris, 1813).

⁴⁴ ADHG, 1C3283, f.136-137, ‘Commission à Mr. de Froidour pour l'exercice de la charge de grand-maître... des Eaux-et-Forêts en Languedoc, Béarn, Basse-Navarre, Soule et Labourd, 13 février 1673’.

⁴⁵ Paul de Castéran, *L'oeuvre de M. de Froidour au XVIIe siècle* (Toulouse, 1896); Paul de Castéran, ed., *Les Pyrénées Centrales au XVIIe siècle. Lettres écrites par Mr de Froidour...* (Auch, 1899); Jean Bourdette, ‘La maîtrise particulière des Eaux et Forêts de Comminges avant 1789’, *Revue de Comminges*, XII, 4 (1897); Louis Vié, ‘Dernières années et mort de Louis de Froidour’, *Bulletin de la Société archéologique du Midi de la France*, 42-43 (1912-1914), pp. 230-234; Michel Devèze, *Louis de Froidour: commissaire-réformateur des forêts de Languedoc, Rouergue, Quercy, Navarre, Béarn, Provinces Pyrénéennes et Angoumois (1666-1675)* (Paris, 1962); Michel Bartoli, ‘Louis de Froidour, (1626?-1685), notre héritage forestier’, *Les dossiers forestiers de l'ONF*, 23 (2011); Jérôme Buridant, ‘Froidour avant Froidour: l'action de Louis de Froidour dans les forêts du nord de la France, 1651-1666’, *Les cahiers de Framespa* (2013); Poulblanc, *Compter*.

⁴⁶ See Michel Bartoli, ‘Louis de Froidour’.

influence and literary output of other elite foresters, such as Henri Clausse de Fleury, Antoine Pecquet or Dominique-Antoine Telles d'Acosta.⁴⁷

After a lull corresponding to the two World Wars, Michel Devèze pioneered a revival of interest in forestry history and inspired a wave of research in the domain.⁴⁸ The 1960s decade also saw the creation of organisations dedicated to the study of the history of French forestry, such as the *Groupe d'Histoire des Forêts Françaises*, founded in 1982. National institutions like the CNRS or the *Ecole des Chartes* further fostered research in French forestry history, supported by the rise of the ecological sciences in the 1970s based on interdisciplinary work, an approach particularly well-suited to a topic such as forestry.

The literature emerging from that period remained broadly in the line of classic narratives, focusing on forestry structures and momentous reform events, such as those of François 1er, Henri IV, or Louis XIV. Devèze's meticulous studies of sixteenth century forestry and Colbert's *Grandes Réformations* were a powerful influence in this new trend, although the latter work was criticised for its over-reliance on Parisian sources. Together, these accounts depict the consolidation of a normative legal and administrative framework that gradually increased state tutelage over the forests owned by the Church, municipalities, or individuals. Most importantly, Colbert's *Réformations* emerged as the climax in this long evolution of monarchical control of forestry matters in the provinces. For Michel Antoine, "[l]'histoire de la législation des eaux et forêts avant 1791 se divise tout naturellement en deux périodes: avant et après 1669."⁴⁹ The *Ordonnance* of August 1669,⁵⁰ which was imposed by the king in a *lit de justice*, embodied the authoritarian regulation by the centre legitimised by its belief that following rational principles of management and control of the forests would guarantee their long-term preservation. After that watershed, the few works focused on eighteenth-century forestry suggest a century-long, gradual decline, leading to

⁴⁷ Henri Clausse de Fleury, *souverain-maître* (1568-1575; 1598-1612); Antoine Pecquet, *grand-maître* de Rouen (1749-1756); Dominique-Antoine Telles d'Acosta, *grand-maître* de Champagne (1752-1758; 1766-1786).

⁴⁸ Michel Devèze, *Une admirable réforme administrative. La grande Réformation des forêts françaises sous Colbert (1661-1680)* (Nancy, 1962); id., *La vie de la forêt française au XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 1961); Marie-Noëlle Grand-Mesnil, *L'administration forestière de la fin de l'Ancien Régime à la réorganisation consulaire, spécialement dans l'arrondissement de Fontainebleau* (Paris, 1962); Louis Badré, *Histoire de la forêt française* (Paris, 1983); Louis Bourgenot et al., *Les Eaux et Forêts du 12^e au 20^e siècle* (Paris, 1987).

⁴⁹ Michel Antoine, *Guide des recherches dans les fonds judiciaires de l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1958), Série Z1E, 'Eaux et Forêts', pp. 285-299, 285.

⁵⁰ A commented version of the *Ordonnance de Louis XIV, ..., sur le fait des Eaux et Forêts, ... St Germain, août 1669* (Paris, 1776) is available online.

the demise of the institution in the revolutionary upheaval.⁵¹ The historiographical lacuna of the period between the end of Louis XIV's reign and the Revolution rests on the fact that the administrative structures established in 1715 remained largely unchanged thereafter. However, this broad trajectory of emergence, climax and fall over such a long period appears overly simplistic. An empirical approach, such as is proposed in this thesis, from the perspective of the 'actors' – the officers in the *maîtrises* and the forestry officials – can provide new insights into the multilayered societal and political processes, which during these seven decades underpinned the evolution of the relationships between the political centre and the periphery.

What particularly crystallised these traditional interpretations of *ancien régime* forestry into immutable tropes were the financial successes and symbolic prestige associated with Colbert's forestry reforms, and the principle of 'state rationality' that underpinned them. Historians and forestry practitioners were dazzled by the unprecedented scale and apparent efficacy of the *Grandes Réformations Forestières*, implemented in every province of the kingdom within just twenty years. This was a relatively short time given the technical and logistical limitations of the period. For Michel Antoine, Colbert's reforms represented a worthy contribution to the rise of what he termed the *monarchie administrative*, characterised by bureaucratic 'functionarisation'. Re-edited more than fifty times between 1669 and 1789,⁵² the *Ordonnance* provided a coherent, homogenous national framework that remained formally valid until the new *Code Forestier* of 1827. Based on previous forestry codes, this legal 'monument' incorporated lessons from the vast amount of information gathered from the different provinces during the *Réformation* process. For Antoine, the *Ordonnance* of August 1669 represented a "magnifique synthèse des ordonnances précédentes et des principes modernes d'administration."⁵³ With their solid legislative basis and bureaucratic component, Colbert's reforms could prefigure the impersonal functionarisation of modern bureaucracies.

In thirty-two titles and over five hundred articles, the new code addressed many aspects of French forestry and waterways. It outlined professional guidelines for each category of

⁵¹ Next to the works on the end-of-century wood crisis (notes 19 to 21), see also Andrée Corvol, *L'Homme et l'Arbre sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1984). For the situation after 1789, see Kieko Matteson, *Forests in Revolutionary France; Conservation, Community, and Conflict, 1669–1848* (Cambridge, 2015).

⁵² Roger Blais, 'L'Ordonnance de Colbert sur les Eaux et Forêts. Radiographie de 50 éditions', *Bulletin du Bibliophile*, 2 (Paris, 1987), pp. 129-178.

⁵³ Antoine, *Guide des recherches*, 287.

officers, prescribed the annual drawing up of exploitation plans adapted to each forest, strengthened technical and bureaucratic control procedures especially regarding wood sales. Auctioneering was confirmed as the only authorised sales method for royal forests. It regulated customary use-rights of forest grazing and wood-collecting more strictly. Crucially, in the technical domain it erected a small number of operational principles as central dogmata of forestry management: the *quart-de-réserve* imposed on all forests owned by crown, Church or communities, rotational harvesting (*tire-et-aire*), and a fixed ratio of standards (*baliveaux*) to be reserved after each cut for the regeneration of harvested plots.⁵⁴ For Andrée Corvol, the clockwork mechanics of the *tire-et-aire* method embodied the Cartesian outlook of a government guided by a spirit of science and rationalism. In the words of Pierre Chaunu who prefaced Corvol's work, "l'Ordonnance de 1669, c'est la nature écrite en langage géométrique."⁵⁵

The historiographical impact of Colbert's legacy in forestry as the harbinger of the 'modern' state was founded not only on the ambitious scope of his programme, but also on its immediately visible outcome. In the three problem areas that had initially driven the intervention, "la crise du trésor, l'appréhension du manque de bois, et [...] les besoins de la marine,"⁵⁶ Colbert had good results to show. Despite their enormous cost (estimated at 1,300,000 livres) the overall financial balance of the *Réformations* was positive. The aggregate returns from fines alone represented 2,000,000 livres.⁵⁷ The revenue from royal forests rose six-fold between 1661 and 1683, not least due to the re-incorporation of abusively alienated forests. The longterm preservation of these productive forests was secured by a stricter control of harmful practices by rural communities, such as forest-grazing or illegal clearing of the forest margins to obtain land for cultivation. Furthermore, within a short time domestic production of naval timber dramatically increased. Longterm supplies seemed secured by imposing a small number of prescriptive management measures, most importantly the *quart-de-réserve* rule (applicable to all forests regardless of owner), or the compulsory declaration before harvesting a naval-grade tree with pre-emptive buying rights reserved for the *Marine* department. In the short term, Colbert's reforms could be considered a success, and his forestry regime an 'ideal-type' of state modernisation. As an effective system of rationally managed forestry, it increased the

⁵⁴ See glossary.

⁵⁵ Corvol, *L'Homme et l'Arbre*, vii.

⁵⁶ Pierre Clément, ed., *Lettres, instructions et mémoires de Colbert*, ..., 8 vols (Paris, 1861-1873), vol.II, 1, 63.

⁵⁷ Bourgenot et al., *Les Eaux et Forêts*, 147.

coercive powers of the state, which legitimised the use of constraining measures by claiming a “superior set of administrative solutions,” apt at tackling the country’s forestry problems.⁵⁸

Some historians have pushed the rationality argument to extremes. In the context of the growing environmental concerns of the last decades of the twentieth century, political ecologists in the wake of James Scott’s *Seeing like a State* used historical examples like these to launch a sweeping polemical attack on authoritarian methods of states and corporations.⁵⁹ They denounced the use of heuristic methods by powerful actors which allowed them to seize, and have control over, limited material resources, often in blunt disregard of social or environmental considerations. To put his point across, Scott used the example of eighteenth-century Prussian ‘scientific forestry’ – with an indirect reference to Colbert - forcing natural tree growth into a “reliable format for taxation.”⁶⁰

‘State rationality’ has also been used by scholars interested in the actual technical and bureaucratic tools developed by the state to manage and regulate the forests, seen as instruments for gaining ever more sophisticated enforcement capabilities.⁶¹ For Sébastien Poulblanc, a specialist on the career of Froidour and an advocate of ‘digital history’, Colbert’s reforms were a remarkable analytical tool to explore the production of early modern ‘utilitarian knowledge’ serving the objectives of the state. Viewed from this perspective, Froidour was a judicious choice as, ironically, his bureaucratic profligacy overwhelmed even the legendary information-processing skills of his master. “Vous avez employé trop de papiers aux volumes de la réformation des Eaux et Forêts de la grande maîtrise de Toulouse, pour peu d’écritures. Ces volumes monstrueux m’empêcheront de les

⁵⁸ Karl Appuhn, ‘Inventing Nature: Forests, Forestry, and State Power in Renaissance Venice’, *Journal of Modern History*, 72, 4 (2000), pp. 861-889, 862.

⁵⁹ James Scott, *Seeing like a State, how certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed* (New Haven, London, 1998).

⁶⁰ Id., ‘State simplifications: nature, space and people’, *Political Order*, 38 (1996), pp. 42-85, 50.

⁶¹ On epistemological aspects of early modern administrative history, see for example Jacob Soll, *The Information Master. Jean-Baptiste Colbert's Secret State Intelligence System* (Ann Arbor, 2011); Filippo de Vivo, *Information and communication in Venice: rethinking early modern politics* (Oxford, 2007); Edward Higgs, *The information state in England: the central collection of information on citizens since 1500* (Basingstoke, 2004); John Rule and Ben Trotter, *A World of Paper; Louis XIV, Colbert de Torcy, and the Rise of the Information State* (Montreal, 2014); Marie-Laure Legay, ‘The Beginnings of Public Management: administrative science and Political choices in the eighteenth century in France, Austria and the Austrian Netherlands’, *The Journal of Modern History*, 81, 2 (2009), pp. 253-293.

mettre dans ma bibliothèque.”⁶² Poulanc argued that, conceptually, the large body of forest surveys, silvicultural information and compendia of bureaucratic techniques produced by Froidour represented a novel and powerful instrument of territorial control for the monarch.⁶³ The ‘databank’ he generated embodied the advent of a “nouveau cadre de contrôle du territoire tout autant qu’un instrument de mainmise sur une ressource stratégique – la forêt et ses produits.”⁶⁴ Forestry ‘data’, and the constantly refined techniques used to obtain them, represented effective tools of territorial consolidation and administrative efficiency. They were valuable “vehicles of authority or objectivity.”⁶⁵ After the stabilisation of the Pyrenean border with Spain in 1659 and the inclusion of new territories in the following decades, these epistemological approaches appear especially pertinent, as a better knowledge of the territory would have significantly empowered the many *maîtrises* which, like Quillan, managed the forests along France’s long and heavily-forested southern, eastern and northern borders.

On the other hand, epistemological approaches have been criticised for their undifferentiated assumptions of the centralising, rationalising state power that underpinned them. In his study of forestry administration of Renaissance Venice - a smaller political unit than France but with an equally centralised power structure - Karl Appuhn alerted us to the risks of an overly narrow interpretation of state rationality.⁶⁶ Despite vast differences in scale between the Italian city-state and the French territory, the two forestry regimes showed arresting similarities in terms of their main guiding principles. They were both rigidly fixated on production goals driven by state needs, and to achieve these goals both used increasingly coercive forestry legislation. This legislative effort was contingent on the concomitant development of a technical and bureaucratic framework, based on a rational, measurable control of space and time the forests, in the form of maps, surveys and catalogues, or the control of timings of timber exploitation.

⁶² Colbert’s response to Froidour (11 Nov.1673) after he received the pack of registers concerning the *Réformation* in Languedoc. Quoted in Bartoli, ‘Louis de Froidour’, 78.

⁶³ On the aspect of territorial control, see Chandra Mukerji, *Territorial ambitions and the gardens of Versailles* (Cambridge, 1997); id., ‘Jurisdiction, inscription, and state formation: administrative modernism and knowledge regimes’, *Theory & Society*, 40, 3 (2011), pp. 223-245; id., ‘The Great Forestry Survey of 1669-1671: the use of archives for political reform’, *Social Studies of Science*, 37, 2 (2007), pp. 227-253.

⁶⁴ Sébastien Poulanc, ‘L’usage de l’archive comme fondement du pouvoir monarchique; la forêt de papier de la réformation de Froidour (1666-1673)’, *Les Cahiers de Framespa*, (13, 2013), (online) paragraph 10.

⁶⁵ Peter Becker, William Clark, eds., *Little tools of knowledge* (Ann Arbor, 2001), 1.

⁶⁶ Appuhn, ‘Inventing nature’.

Appuhn argued that the application of state rationality could lead to ambiguous interpretations for both contemporary politicians and historians. His argument was based on the comparison of timber yields in state-controlled forests and community forests of the Venetian upland, between 1569 and 1636. In state forests, stricter controls had apparently produced disappointing results. The numbers of high-quality timber trees were decreasing. Figures were better in communal forests despite local residents frequently disregarding regulations. Paradoxically, their pilfering in the undergrowth had over time created better conditions for timber growth by clearing spaces for growth around the most promising young ‘poles’. Appuhn concluded that the “lumber crews” of the Venetian upland “understood the consequences of state policies in ways that the senators in Venice did not.”

⁶⁷ This resonates with the recent emphasis of forestry scholars of various European traditions on the adequacy, in environmental terms, of local knowledge of the bio-physical characteristics of the forest ecosystem, which contrasted with the damaging effects of state-produced regulations. ⁶⁸ Crucially, in the Venetian case such knowledge also extended to the subaltern officials on the ground, who, in their own right, displayed “an unexpectedly high level of technical sophistication.” ⁶⁹

This last point is important. It hints at the contrasting rationales guiding the decision-makers in the centre and the officials in touch with local realities. Central forestry authorities, mindful of preserving their authority, were constrained by a narrowly-legalist purview, while their administrators on the ground had a good grasp of the natural and social environment that framed their role as enforcers of forest law. We can therefore argue that perspectives assuming a drivebelt-style mechanism that ignores the regulative effect of local resistance or the autonomy of intermediary officials are reductive. As will be shown in chapter four, recovering some of the operational uncertainties and complexities pertaining to the human reality that underpinned the practice of forestry greatly mitigates the notion that governmental decisions axiomatically translated into authoritarian acts of domination.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 888.

⁶⁸ For example Richard Keyser, ‘The Transformation of Traditional Woodland Management: Commercial Sylviculture in Medieval Champagne’, *French Historical Studies*, 32, 3 (2009), pp. 353-384; in his *Ancient Woodland, its history, vegetation and uses in England* (London, 1980), Oliver Rackham, a specialist of British woodlands, observed evidence of the idea of ‘sustainability’ in medieval times.

⁶⁹ Appuhn, ‘Inventing nature’, 887.

New approaches in institutional history

Classic institutional history is one domain of historical research, which has been deeply affected by the recent trend to move away from traditional structure-based approaches and recover the ‘human element’ in institutional history. Social histories of institutions have shed new light on the workings of early modern institutions in many areas of public life. From the 1970s, they explored the social and cultural dimensions of institutional processes, providing insights in to the “practices and sociology of the corporate bodies that formed the state.”⁷⁰ With the help of the prosopographical method, this scholarship offered more nuanced representations of the multiple ways in which the state used its normative administrative and jurisdictional powers to assert its authority. In Joël Cornette’s effective formulation, “[L]oin d’une histoire figée des institutions qui décrirait en somme un État abstrait en ne s’attachant qu’à la lettre des ordonnances et des édits ou à l’écriture normative et rigide des juristes, de nombreuses études centrent à présent l’analyse sur le fonctionnement et les pratiques de la machine administrative et les rapports «réels» institués entre gouvernants et gouvernés, entre roi et sujets, entre Paris et provinces, entre capitale et périphéries, entre centralisation et décentralisation.”⁷¹

At intermediate levels of society and the institutional hierarchy, the new social and cultural history of institutions especially highlighted the negotiated, adaptive role of office-holders as brokers of princely authority in the provinces. By the 1660s, the 40,000 or so second-rank notables who had invested in a non-ennobling, intermediary office as a source of modest *gages*, privileges, dynastic stability and local respectability, represented a sizeable body whose interests and ambitions the state could not ignore. In their own right and by their own agency, historians of France’s *officiers moyens* concluded, they were “élément(s) moteur(s) dans la construction de l’Etat.”⁷² Far from representing an anonymous cogwheel in the state apparatus, these brokers of royal authority were “intermédiaires souples,” moved by interests that could be markedly distinct from those of their service.⁷³

Within this broad historiographical movement, the mid-ranking officers of the *ancien régime* forestry institution received only scant attention. Historians seeking explanations

⁷⁰ Campbell, *Power and politics*, 15.

⁷¹ Cornette, ‘L’histoire au travail’, 580.

⁷² Cassan, ‘Pour une enquête’, 97.

⁷³ Vincent Meyzie, ‘L’autorité administrative des officiers “moyens” de justice: fondements, aspects et limites’, in: Antoine Follain, dir., *Contrôler et Punir, Les agents du pouvoir XVe-XVIIIe siècles* (Dijon, 2015), pp. 79-101.

for the *Eaux-et-Forêts*' apparent failings to tackle the mounting wood crisis of the eighteenth century just blamed 'en-bloc' their venal status. They looked first and foremost for exogenous causes, outside the institution. Economic historians interested in questions of the production, distribution and consumption of wood products described the rise of industrial and household consumption, or the technical contingencies regarding the production and distribution of wood.⁷⁴ A vast and continuing debate sparked by John Nef in 1936 discussed the link between industrialisation and the shortage of wood as an energy resource in early modern Europe.⁷⁵ Others described the ravages caused by military operations, or the daily degradations committed by marauding village populations.⁷⁶

Scholars interested in systemic causes focused mostly on the technical, silvicultural principles that underpinned forestry law. Armed with the benefit of hindsight, they criticised the longterm consequences of a wide and unyielding application of misguided technical tenets. Andrée Corvol was a particularly vocal critic of the system's rigid "bureaucratisme dérivé de l'institution colbertienne," which prioritised legalist arguments over empirical ones based on observation. As an untouchable dogma, the superior status of the high forest oak over other species, she deplored, burdened eighteenth and nineteenth-century governments with large stands of over-mature oak with little commercial value, whilst impeding the adequate provision of firewood (predominantly based on other broadleaves) for the country's growing population and industry.⁷⁷

While each of these causes might have contributed to the worsening of the situation towards the end of the eighteenth century, there was little interest in internal causes linked to the forestry system, its hierarchy, and the role played by the forestry personnel. At

⁷⁴ For the French context, see for example Denis Woronoff, dir., *Forges et forêts. Recherches sur la consommation proto-industrielle du bois*, (Paris, 1990); see in this work especially: Jean Boissière, 'La consommation parisienne de bois et les sidérurgies périphériques: essai de mise en parallèle (milieu XVe - milieu XIXe siècles)', pp. 29-56; Catherine Verna, 'Fer, bois, houille: forge hydraulique et gestion des combustibles (XIVe siècle, Pyrénées-Languedoc)', in: Simonetta Cavaciocchi, *Economia e Energia*, pp. 341-356.

⁷⁵ John Nef, 'A Comparison of Industrial Growth in France and England, 1540-1640,' *Journal of Political Economy*, 44, 4 (1936), pp. 36-74; G. Hammersley, 'The crown woods and their exploitation in the 16th and 17th centuries', *Historical Research*, 30, 82 (1957), pp. 136-161; Edward A. Wrigley, *Continuity, Chance and Change. The character of the industrial revolution in England* (Cambridge, 1988); Michael Williams, *Deforesting the earth, from prehistory to global crisis* (Chicago, London, 2003).

⁷⁶ For example Peter Sahlin, *Forest Rites: the War of the Demoiselles in nineteenth-century France* (Cambridge, Mass., 1994); Edward P. Thompson, *Whigs & Hunters: the origin of the Black Act* (London, 2013).

⁷⁷ Andrée Corvol, 'La politique forestière de Colbert', in: Roland Mousnier, dir., *Un nouveau Colbert* (Paris, 1986), pp. 229-240.

higher levels of the hierarchy, the prosopographical survey of France's *grand-maîtres* from 1689 to 1789 by Jean-Claude Waquet, a student of Michel Antoine, is to date the only study dedicated to this group. Waquet depicts a relatively homogenous body of robe officers of recent nobility, often rooted in finance or in the judiciary. Waquet however restricted his study to prosopographical details of these elite foresters and financial aspects of their office. There is still much scope to expand on Waquet's pioneering work, for example through regional approaches or specific case studies.

A prosopographical study of the middle ranks of the *Eaux-et-Forêts* institution based on 'real actors' who, in the words of John Brewer (an advocate of the micro-historical approach) had "agency, motives, feeling and consciousness,"⁷⁸ is still unwritten. Contemporary observers and historians commonly bundled intermediate forestry officials into an anonymous group of provincial operators, whose sole visible agency seemed to consist in acts of corruption or other forms of professional misconduct. Contemporary observers readily linked the professional malpractice, which bedeviled the workings of many *maîtrises* to the venal status of their officers. For Froidour, "à même temps qu'un homme en était pourvu, il pouvait se dire propriétaire de la forêt dont il était l'officier, avec cette seule différence qu'au lieu que le propriétaire en aurait pris quelque soin, celui-ci ne faisait aucune diligence pour la conserver, de manière que pas un de ces sortes d'officiers n'ont pu nous représenter le moindre exploits de leurs visites."⁷⁹

Views such as these have been relayed by historians who uncritically included them in the catalogue of causes for the institution's long-term decline. For Gustave Huffel, "[c]ette déchéance tient sans doute à la vénalité des offices qui introduisit dans le service, et surtout dans les grades les plus élevés, à partir du milieu du xv^e siècle, des oisifs, étrangers à toute notion de sylviculture et à toute tradition."⁸⁰ For Huffel, the reason was simple. These foresters were "oisifs" who had bought their office "comme on achète une terre ou un titre de rente, et ne songeaient qu'à en tirer le plus de profit avec le moins de tracasseries possible."⁸¹ Making short-shrift of analysing the problems (and achievements) of the institution from the point of view of its operators, these general views led to the sweeping statement that forestry was "symptomatic of France's whole political and administrative

⁷⁸ John Brewer, 'Microhistory and the Histories of Everyday Life', *Cultural and Social History*, 7, 1 (2010), pp. 87-109, 89.

⁷⁹ ADHG, 1A12, 228.

⁸⁰ Huffel, *Les méthodes*, 53.

⁸¹ Gustave Huffel, *Economie forestière*, 3 vols (Paris, 1904-7). Here, vol.1, 128.

system in the late eighteenth century: slow, corrupt, remote and dysfunctional.”⁸² From this perspective, the *Eaux et Forêts* were doomed to fail.

As this thesis will show, mid-ranking forestry officers were not a passive and corrupt transmission device of an authoritarian decision-making centre. They operated in powerful social and cultural local and regional contexts. At local level, their close personal and professional association with dominant local groups conferred upon them both respectability and personal ‘credit’, and it provided a solid basis for their career and their families. By the same token, these local ties had also the potential of coaxing them into participating in a culture of fraud, abuse of power, and corruption. As shown by the example cited in the first chapter, this could also lead to internal divisions to the point of verbal and physical violence. Analysing from their own perspective the field of tensions in which these officers operated will shed some light on their perception of service, and on the foundations and limits of their administrative authority. It will demonstrate that a centralised, well-structured institution such as forestry, organised along rational principles of administration, could be derailed, or at least destabilised, by processes occurring at the lower rungs of the hierarchy. Without an established body of research on mid-ranking foresters to lean on, our study has been particularly inspired by recent scholarship in three main domains, *officier-moyen* research, the study of towns and their network dynamics, and corruption as a historical concept.

Officiers-Moyens studies

Recent research on the vast and somewhat ill defined group of France’s *officiers moyens* was particularly inspirational.⁸³ Historians like Jean Nagle, Michel Cassan or Vincent Meyzie have used the prosopographical method to establish collective profiles of seigneurial judges or officers manning the *présidiaux*, *bureaux des finances* or *élections*. For Meyzie, the latter even represented an ideal-type of these “compagnies secondes.”⁸⁴ Jean Nagle, whose research on the *marc d’or* had pioneered interest for this group, went on to explore the moral foundations underlying the venal office as a specifically French “passion”. In his *Un orgueil français*, he examined the connection between the

⁸² Hamish Graham, ‘Fleur de lys in the forest, ‘absolute’ monarchy and attempts at resource management in eighteenth-century France’, *French History*, 23, 3 (2009), pp. 311-335, 322.

⁸³ For *officiers moyens* literature, see note 36.

⁸⁴ Vincent Meyzie, ‘Les mobilisations provinciales réussies de compagnies secondes : les négociations des élections d’Auvergne et du Dauphiné avec la monarchie louis-quatorzienne’, *Histoire, Économie & Société*, 4 (2012), pp. 23-43.

administrative authority associated with the office, and the distinct concepts of *dignité* and *honneur*.⁸⁵

Studies of the *présidiaux* were particularly useful because of the similarities between *présidial* magistrates and the officers of the *maîtrises*. Both were mid-ranking, legally-trained office-holders, residing in small towns with limited promotion opportunities, and both were on the lookout for strategies to maintain their position within a competitive local power arena. Both institutions were from the outset caught in a continuing struggle to impose their jurisdiction. In Cornette's analysis, the introduction of *présidial* courts in 1551 had been a game-changer in many towns. "Cette vague de création de nouveaux officiers a provoqué une recomposition de la hiérarchie urbaine du royaume et, à l'intérieur de chaque ville, une redistribution des pouvoirs [...] des coutumes et des honneurs."⁸⁶ A recent body of research based on individual case studies has launched a debate on the widely assumed decline of the *présidial* group in the second half of the eighteenth century.⁸⁷ Reasons for the 'crisis' were linked to rising levels of debts of presidial families for an office increasingly ill-adapted to the needs of the time, and overshadowed by more powerful categories of officers or the growing non-venal 'caste' of engineers and other professional groups, perceived as more immediately useful for the common good.⁸⁸ Public visibility and service usefulness, a common theme in pre-revolutionary criticism against 'privileged' office-holders, is an important aspect to be considered in our analysis of Quillan's foresters.

More questionable are Cassan's interpretations regarding the normative role of state bureaucratisation, and the part it played in the decline of *présidial* authority. His view of an "irrésistible gonflement de l'Etat par la voie de l'office" advancing towards a modern bureaucratic regime is redolent of Michel Antoine's *monarchie administrative*. With its "mécanisme administrative bien rodée, secrétant ses normes, sa prose, ses tableaux et formulaires prêts à remplir et versant dans la routinisation," the bureaucratic state, Cassan argued, signalled that "[l]a monarchie administrative est une réalité, en quête d'efficacité."

⁸⁵ Jean Nagle, *le droit de marc d'or des offices. Tarifs de 1583, 1704, 1748* (Genève, 1992); id., *Un orgueil français*.

⁸⁶ Cornette, 'L'histoire au travail', 572, note 33.

⁸⁷ Christophe Blanquie, *Justice et Finance*; Vincent Meyzie, *Les illusions perdues de la magistrature seconde : les officiers "moyens" de justice en Limousin et en Périgord, (vers 1665-vers 1810)* (Limoges, 2006), esp. 292-323.

⁸⁸ Michel Cassan, 'De l'État « moderne » à ses administrateurs « moyens », *Histoire, Économie & Société*, 23, 4 (2004), pp. 467-472, 470-2.

⁸⁹ A forestry-related example can illustrate our doubts. We have ample evidence that Froidour sought to improve the mechanics of bureaucratic practice, but how did his intentions translate into practice? Title VIII of the 1669 *Ordonnance* required the *greffier* to keep, on an annual basis, eight separate categories of registers, and one can surmise that over the years the enormous physical volume this represented would have quickly outgrown the walls of the chamber where they were housed. It is tempting to assume that, over time, the rule was ‘adapted’ to more realistic proportions. The numerous gaps in the surviving records of the forestry series might be attributed to accidents of archival conservation. On the other hand, one of the cases described in this study proves that this constraining rule was less than strictly followed. In Burgundy, during an inspection visit at the *maîtrise* of Avallon in 1718 the *grand-maître* of Paris was appalled to find only “quelques feuilles de papier unies les unes aux autres” instead of the three statutory registers.⁹⁰ In matters of bureaucratic rationality too there was a big gap between theory and practice.

Officers between crown and town

Cassan’s observations regarding the relationship between crown and town raise another important question. Following Tocqueville’s assumptions about the centralising state and corresponding weakening of municipal powers, Cassan suggested that in many pre-modern small towns the alleged predominance of the state might have destroyed the old “‘triple alliance’ entre les officiers royaux, les bons marchands et les gens de justice, garantissant l’harmonie citadine.”⁹¹ This question of the resilience of ancestral structures against interventions of the crown, and the political attitudes and loyalties of intermediary officers in this struggle, touches at the heart of the centre-periphery debate. Historians have asked how far loyalties were determined by a “solidarité éprouvée avec la ville et les intérêts citadins,” or instead by “des aspirations sociales façonnées par le tropisme nobiliaire,”⁹² the latter alluding to nobility-centred networks operating as ‘natural’ conduits towards the upper spheres of power closest to the king.

The integration of the state into urban structures has given rise to a growing number of studies. On a whole, they tend to mitigate classic notions of a victorious advance of the

⁸⁹ Cassan, *Offices et officiers moyens*, 9.

⁹⁰ Archives Départementales de l’Yonne, 13B 3, 27 octobre 1718, quoted in Corvol, *L’homme et l’arbre*, 403.

⁹¹ Cassan, *Offices et officiers moyens*, 97.

⁹² Meyzie, *Les illusions perdues*, 15.

administrative monarchy into the *corps urbains* of secondary towns and cities, such as Cassan assumed.⁹³ For Dijon for example, Michael Breen highlighted the crucial role of legal professionals before 1661 defending the rights of the town against repeated interventions by state agents, but he also described the municipality's progressive submission thereafter to the governor and intendant who exploited strife and factionalism among Dijon's local elites.⁹⁴ At the same time the political agency of the town's *avocats* increased through their intellectual contributions to general jurisprudence. As "skilled hommes politiques, [they] could manipulate law, institutions, and patronage to successfully defend municipal interests, even in adverse circumstances."⁹⁵ They played an important part in the formation of a 'legal public sphere' that "engendered and sustained a culture of political appraisal which was transformed during the eighteenth century into a broader and ultimately more influential public critique."⁹⁶ This example alerts us to the need to closely examine the influence of municipal, regional and royal agents, and the role played by the royal foresters in a micro-battleground for power, which appears far more complex and fluid than a simple dichotomic choice between allegiance to the town or loyalty to the crown.

Following such an approach, it is important to situate the town within the perceived hierarchy of the country's urban system. As William Beik vividly described for Languedoc,⁹⁷ the official status of a town or city had a profound impact on the choices and opportunities it offered its residents, including royal officers. One recent approach suggested the existence in early modern Europe of a system of cities, which evolved according to economic factors linked to a proto-industrialisation located in rural settings. For Jan de Vries, this suggests a regional, rather than national, framework for these dynamic processes. "An assessment of the place of urban settlements in the economy and

⁹³ For example, Pierre Goubert, *Beauvais et le Beauvaisis de 1600 à 1730. Contribution à l'histoire sociale du 17^e siècle* (Paris, 1960); Jean-Pierre Poussou, *Les Petites Villes du Moyen-Age à nos Jours* (Paris, 1987); Jean Meyer et Jean-Pierre Poussou, *Etudes sur les villes françaises, du milieu du 17^e siècle à la veille de la Révolution française* (Paris, 1995); René Plessix, Jean-Pierre Poussou, *Les petites villes françaises du XVII^e au XIX^e siècle. Aspects du paysage et de la société* (Paris, 2005); François-Joseph Ruggiu, *Les élites et les villes moyennes en France et en Angleterre (17^e-18^e siècles)* (Paris, 1997); Philippe Castagnetti, ed., *Images et pratiques de la ville (vers 1500-vers 1840)* (Saint-Étienne, 2003).

⁹⁴ Michael Breen, 'Law, Society, and the State in Early Modern France', *The Journal of Modern History*, 83, 2 (2011), pp. 346-386.

⁹⁵ Michael Breen, 'Law, Patronage and Municipal Authority in Seventeenth-Century France: The Aftermath of the Lanturelu Revolt in Dijon', *French History*, 20, 2 (2006), pp. 138-160, 143.

⁹⁶ K.A.J. Mclay, Review Article of M.Breen's *Law, City and King*, in *French History*, vol.23, Issue 1 (2009), 126.

⁹⁷ William Beik, *Absolutism*, 59-76.

society of early modern Europe requires an examination urban-rural interactions in a regional framework.”⁹⁸ In this particular approach, the regional hierarchy of towns depended on competitive relations between trading centres in a region, or between regional centres and their hinterlands. Crucially, “the urban functions of controlling production and providing for the circulation of goods and services were not carried out primarily to fulfil the needs of a command structure ‘at the top’.”⁹⁹

This economically oriented perspective complements the classic use of population size and institutional infrastructure as the main parameters for establishing a hierarchy of early modern towns. The position of a town within this hierarchy had a direct influence on the personal ‘credit’ of its residents, but also on the value of the offices, and on tariffs such as *marc d’or* and the *capitation*. Conversely, residency in a particular town determined individuals’ chances of accessing useful networks that could open up pathways for professional and social advancement. If the town did not provide these opportunities, officers might be trapped inside narrow clientage networks converging towards local or regional sources of power.

The importance of the exchange of power and influence through networks, patronage and clientèles in early modern life has been amply demonstrated in recent scholarship, notably in the works of Sharon Kettering.¹⁰⁰ She showed that the monarchical state was reliant on the complex web of relationships that linked court society and influential patrons of the upper spheres of the polity to the members of the *sanior pars* of France’s towns. Under Louis XIV, webs of dependency connected wealthy provincial lenders, many of them nobles, directly to the king’s inner circle.¹⁰¹ A good example of such royal clientelism is the part played by clientage and patronage in facilitating negotiations at the *Etats*, as described by Stéphane Durand et al.¹⁰² While major studies focused on provincial elites, at municipal level, clientage webs were the conduits for conflicts and strategies around

⁹⁸ Jan de Vries, *European urbanization 1500-1800* (London, 1984), 9.

⁹⁹ Id. 263.

¹⁰⁰ Sharon Kettering, *Patrons, brokers, and clients in seventeenth-century France* (New York, Oxford, 1986); id., ‘Gift-giving and patronage in early modern France’, *French History*, 2, 2, (1988), pp. 131-151; id., ‘Patronage in Early Modern France’, *French Historical Studies*, 17, 4 (Autumn 1992), pp. 839-862; id., *Patronage in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century France* (Aldershot, 2002); Breen, *Law, City, and King*.

¹⁰¹ Major studies for the Languedoc context are Beik, *Absolutism*, and Jean-François Dubost, ‘Absolutisme et centralisation en Languedoc au XVIIe siècle (1620-1690)’, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 37, 3 (1990), pp.369-397

¹⁰² Durand, S., Jouanna, A. Pélaquier, E., *Des Etats dans l’Etat: les Etats de Languedoc de la Fronde à la Révolution* (Genève, 2014), especially pp. 413-416.

financial dealings, matrimonial alliances, family politics, and other forms of social bondage.¹⁰³ These social network dynamics were further entangled with the power tussles that opposed urban oligarchies, *corps de villes* and royal agents. Foresters in the service of the king, clearly, did not operate in a void. Their professional activity was framed by the specific social, economic and cultural characteristics of their urban environment. In order to define more precisely the identity and agency of mid-ranking foresters, it is therefore necessary to get a better understanding of this specific urban power arena that surrounded them.

In this respect, the town of Quillan, fifty kilometres south of Carcassonne, is a pertinent example. With approximately 1.200 inhabitants,¹⁰⁴ it was a small, walled town and river port on the Aude, whose forest-rich upper basin was a key area in the search for naval timber and the provision of manufacturing and household wood. Because the river upstream was suitable for the floating of timber, the town developed early into a thriving centre of raft-building and wood commerce. As will be further developed in chapter two, until the arrival of commissioner Froidour, in terms of royal control the Quillan district had been notoriously under-administered for centuries. In 1671, the situation changed abruptly when it was chosen as the seat of the royal forestry institution. This makes Quillan an ideal gauge to evaluate the process of implantation of royal authority in a distant border province such as Languedoc. The establishment of the *maîtrise particulière* by Froidour in November 1671, and the subsequent construction of the *Maison Royale* in the very centre of the town, created a sudden disturbance in the lives and routines of its bourgeois and merchant elites. Being at once a conspicuous centre of royal authority and a local *lieu de sociabilité*, the new structure sparked a reconfiguration of the municipal power scene. It opened new opportunities for individuals and their families, creating rival, or complementary, conduits of power.

On the other hand, the new opportunities introduced by the royal institution were counterbalanced by tighter controls and more constraining measures. In Quillan, Froidour's first step as *Réformation* commissioner had been to remove the town's use-rights to royal forests.¹⁰⁵ While for centuries it had been "loisible à toutes personnes d'y aller couper,"¹⁰⁶ he replaced the centuries-old free access to wood from royal forests in

¹⁰³ Cassan, 'Pour une enquête', 101.

¹⁰⁴ Figure of 1788.

¹⁰⁵ ADAD, 63C73, f.263-265r.

¹⁰⁶ ADHG, 1A12, t.1, f.63v.

that district with a strictly regulated sales process, under the sole responsibility of the *grand-maître* and the *maîtrise* officers. It would, however, be overhasty to conclude that these events constituted a ‘victorious’ advance of the crown into a defenseless community. Some important questions must be explored. How did the tension between opportunity and constraint manifest itself, and how did it evolve? Was the change driven by negotiation or conflict? And, crucially, what was the role of the officers in this evolution?

For the post-1661 decades, Poublanc’s analysis of the multipolar opposition sparked by Froidour’s establishment of eleven new-style *maîtrises* underscored the role of rival institutions in the region, mostly the *Parlement* and the *Etats*, but also the pressure exerted by influential individuals such as the archbishop of Narbonne or local forest-owning nobles.¹⁰⁷ The impact of forest-centred vested interests must also be considered at the level of the town. Here, the research of Christian Fruhauf was a useful pointer. In his fine-grained study of forestry in the Pyrenean Sault plateau (an important potential site for shipmast timber), this scholar documented the transition from a traditional local wood economy based on customary rights, to a regime dominated, especially after Louis XIV’s reign, by the financial interests of a local wood merchant elite.¹⁰⁸ Fruhauf was one of the few to appreciate the impact of commercial aspects of wood production. His insights inspired us to expand our prosopographical analysis of forestry officers to the wood merchants who were their close professional counterparts, and with whom they were personally interlinked. With this broader perspective in mind, chapter three will therefore critically analyse the dynamics that shaped these networks, the existence of asymmetries between dominant and dependent partners, and above all, the way these allegiances influenced the professional practice – or malpractice – of the officers.

Corruption as a historical concept

The ‘corruption’ of mid-ranking forestry officers is the third main theme addressed in this study. While the elusive definition of this term in a historical context will be discussed

¹⁰⁷ Poublanc, *Compter*, 194-210. These questions too will be further elaborated on in chapter two.

¹⁰⁸ Christian Fruhauf, *Forêt et Société, de la forêt paysanne à la forêt capitaliste en pays de Sault sous l’Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1980), especially pp. 195-233. On early modern wood merchants, see also Jean Boissière, ‘Exploitation et commerce du bois aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècle dans les pays de la Haute Seine’, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine*, XXV, 2, (1978), pp. 321-339; Francine Rolley, ‘Entre économie ancienne et économie de marché; le rôle des réseaux de parenté dans le commerce du bois au XVIIIe siècle’, *Annales de Démographie Historique* (1995), pp. 75-96; Jean Boissière, ‘La forêt des marchands’, in: Andrée Corvol, ed., *La forêt, perceptions et représentations* (Paris, 1997), pp. 133-145.

more amply, it must be said at the start that the word itself covers an enormous spectrum of practices through time and space. It is taken as a “social and political construction that can change over time as well as from one society or from one state to another.”¹⁰⁹ The use of inverted commas indicates that, while some common characteristics can be found between the early modern phenomenon and the practices of the modern world, there can be no question here of using it in the sense of abuse of power and betrayal of trust by elected politicians, large corporate organisations, or other elites of globalised economies.

In the early modern context, official discourse was laced with references linking ‘corruption’ and venality. Holding an office of judicature or finance was from the outset used as a metaphor for professional negligence and abuse of power for personal gain. In 1588, the *cahier de doléances* of Paris noted that “la négligence des ministres de la Justice peu soigneux de leurs charges quand il n’y a aucun profit, partie de leur avarice et insatiable cupidité, étant corrompus les uns par faveur, les autres par dons et présents portant des âmes basses sordides et vénales et qu’au leu de servir au public et d’exercer de bonnes et vertueuses fonctions, s’asservissent comme esclaves de robe longue sous la turpitude d’un gain deshonnête qui leur ôte la hauteur de courage et la généreuse liberté qui doit accompagner le magistrat.”¹¹⁰ Referring to examples from Antiquity, Jean Bodin famously stigmatised the notion of long-term office ownership as essentially contradicting “la vertu”, a basic principle underpinning his *République*. For Bodin, office-ownership encouraged the thirst for profit, and a large number of “officiers perpétuels” covering each other was synonymous with the ‘corruption’ of the whole state as this practice allowed “toutes les méchancetés, faussetés & concussions du plus injuste Magistrat qu’on pourroit imaginer” to go unpunished.¹¹¹ As office creations proliferated in the first decades of the seventeenth century, mounting evidence of malfunctioning in the different segments of the monarchical administrative system appeared to confirm Bodin’s view that uncontrolled swelling of the body of venal officers had the potential to thwart good governance. In official discourse and in public perception, the venal nature of the officers had a negative impact on the quality of their service. The financial liabilities incurred by the acquisition of the office and its progressive devalorisation pushed them to prioritise financial motives over service loyalty and professional zeal. By the time of Montesquieu and Voltaire, the

¹⁰⁹ Peter Jones, *From Virtue to Venality: Corruption in the City* (Manchester, 2013), 2.

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Jean-Marie Constant, ‘Absolutisme et modernité’, in Guy Chaussinand-Nogaret et al., *Histoire des elites en France du XVIe au XXe siècle; l'honneur, le mérite, l'argent* (Paris, 1991), 149.

¹¹¹ Jean Bodin, *Les six livres de la République*, (Paris, 1577), IV, iv, 426.

notion of the venal office as the source of bad management, lack of commitment, and outright corruption had crystallised into a lasting trope.¹¹²

As a historical phenomenon, corruption has also been studied from the perspective of the wide semantic field associated with it. Maryvonne Généaux and Jean-Claude Waquet have examined contemporary dictionaries to explore the meanings of words that can be linked to any form of abuse of power by agents of public service.¹¹³ Their findings show that the phenomenon could have many names, of which the word itself was the least common one. In the texts they studied, terms were chosen in a case-by-case approach, in order to describe as accurately as possible the nature of the act. A similar result emerges from our own count of ‘corruption’ in the voluminous first volume of Antoine Pecquet’s *Loix forestières*¹¹⁴: the word corruption (and derived forms) appeared only once. The most commonly used words (*abus*, *délit*) are of a general nature while others denote precisely the nature of the action (*concussion*, *négligence*, *vol*), (Fig. 1).

The choice of words in these legal texts betrays a predominantly legalist approach, driven by the need to apply an adequate judicial response to each individual case. This is especially important for the vocabulary of the *Eaux-et-Forêts* as a forestry tribunal. The author of the preamble in the *lettres patentes* which formally initiated Quillan’s second *Réformation* in 1736 avoids the generic term *corruption* altogether, speaking instead of “abus considérables... [qui] paroissent provenir de la négligence des officiers et gardes et de leurs intelligences avec les adjudicataires, cautions et certificateurs des ventes.”¹¹⁵ In forestry, as elsewhere, in contrast to texts of a moral or religious nature (where ‘corruption’ refers to the corrosion of social *mores*), ‘corruption’ was primarily perceived as an individual offense, a judicial problem to be tackled by the courts.

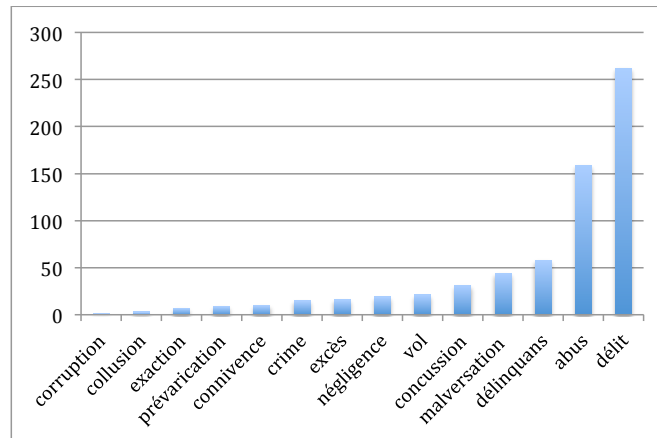
¹¹² Most notably in Book 1, chapter 8, of Montesquieu’s *L’Esprit des Loix* (Genève, 1748, first publication), “De la corruption des principes des trois gouvernements.” In his chapter on corruption in eighteenth-century public service, Jean Meyer cites J.J.Rousseau’s comments on the constitution of Corsica, where he extolled the notion of ‘citoyen’ that ought to replace their status of magistrates. Inspired by the Roman example, Rousseau concluded that *citoyens* were not soldiers, judges or priests “par métier”, but were “tout par devoir.” This fundamental attitude would prevent that “l’hydre de la chicane ne dévore une nation.” (Jean Meyer in: Marcel Pinet, dir., *Histoire de la fonction publique* vol.2 (Paris, 1993), 393.

¹¹³ Jean-Claude Waquet, *La conjuration des dictionnaires. Vérité des mots et vérités de la politique dans la France moderne* (Strasbourg, 2000); Maryvonne Généaux, ‘Les mots de la corruption: la déviance publique dans les dictionnaires d’ancien régime’, *Histoire, Economie & Société*, 21, 4 (2002), pp. 513-530.

¹¹⁴ Antoine Pecquet, *Loix forestières de France, Commentaire historique et raisonné sur l’Ordonnance de 1669*, ... 2 vols, (Paris, 1753).

¹¹⁵ ADAD, 63C64/1, f.1, ‘Arrêt du Conseil et Lettres Patentes portant Etablissement de la reformation de la maitrise des eaux et forets de Quillan...’.

Fig. 1 Number of occurrences of a selection of words
related to ‘corruption’ in Pecquet’s *Loix forestières* (1753)



This legal focus points to the important issue of the governments’ responses to professional malpractice and fraud. In a public sphere increasingly alive with literate and critical observers, remedies to problems affecting everyone were expected. In forestry, governments traditionally responded with the habitual panoply of repressive measures, stricter controls and case-by-case prosecution in ordinary courts. In more extreme cases - or when it was politically opportune - heavy-handed interventions like *Chambres de Justice* or *Réformations Forestières* were launched, bringing about a new spate of coercive legislation.¹¹⁶ For *présidial* magistrates, departures from theoretical norms defining the “perfect Christian magistrate” ranged from minor ‘adjustments’ to the strict application of procedures, to chronic absenteeism, all the way to major acts of “délinquance” calling for a treatment by a special court like the *Grands Jours d’Auvergne*.¹¹⁷ On the other hand, this

¹¹⁶ On *Chambres de Justice*, see for example Françoise Bayard, ‘Les Chambres de Justice de la première moitié du XVII^e siècle’, *Cahiers d’Histoire* 19, 2 (1974), pp.121-140; Chaussinand-Nogaret, *Les financiers du Languedoc au XVIII^e siècle*, (Paris, 1970); Daniel Dessert, *Argent, pouvoir et société au Grand Siècle* (Paris, 1984); E.H. Goldner, ‘Corruption on trial. Money, Power, and Punishment in France’s Chambre de Justice of 1716’, *Crime, Histoire & Sociétés*, 17, 1 (2013), pp. 5-28. On *Réformations Forestières*, apart from Devèze’s *Une admirable réforme*, there is no body of literature focusing specifically on these operations. They are usually treated as part of more general works on forestry, as for example in Waquet, *Les Grands Maîtres*, pp. 251-289.

¹¹⁷ Meyzie, *Les illusions perdues*, 118-125.

narrow legalist scope raises the question of the apparent failure of these legal remedies to contain the phenomenon.

In forestry, a common and convenient explanation was to lay the blame at the door of disinterested officers who saw their office as a purely financial investment. In 1664, Jean-Baptiste Colbert sent his brother Charles Colbert de Croissy to inspect and reform the forestry district of Touraine. He reported back indignantly. “[L]es officiers de la Table de Marbre du Palais à Paris [...] demeurent dans un assoupissement bien blâmable pendant que les officiers des provinces, sur lesquels lesdits de la Table de Marbre [...] devraient veiller comme sur les plus grands ennemis des forêts, les dégradent et les ruinent, la plupart n’ayant traité de leur charge que pour cette fin.”¹¹⁸ Two and a half centuries later, Huffel relayed this criticism near-verbatim, pointing to *ancien régime* officers “qui se laissèrent aller à d’innombrables et odieux abus.”¹¹⁹ More recently, François Bluche used similar prose of “gaspillage, usurpations, défrichements inconsidérés, vols, défaut d’entretien” for a general characterisation of *ancien régime* venal forestry officers. With their “friponneries”, “brigandages” and “insuffisances” they had allegedly encouraged ‘abusive’ wood sales and alienation of domain forests, and precipitated the depletion of the precious high forests intended for the navy.¹²⁰

While it cannot be denied that cutting corners in bureaucratic or technical practice or committing fraud were part and parcel of early modern forestry practice, a better understanding of the reasons for the obduracy of these behaviours can be gained by using an approach which considers the social and cultural reality in which they occurred. Such empirical, contextualised approach has been particularly advocated by scholars interested in the phenomenon of corruption as a historical concept. In recent decades, a growing number of scholars sought to explore the foundations, methods and consequences of administrative and political corruption in regimes of the past. Initially, a number of analytical models based on macro-economic factors or abstract theorisations were proposed, notably by Jacob van Klaveren who reduced ‘corruption’ to a set of financial transactions by civil servants from the perspective of free-market laws.¹²¹ In this

¹¹⁸ Charles Colbert de Croissy, *rapport au Roi sur la province de Touraine*, quoted in Devèze, *Une admirable réforme*, 26-28.

¹¹⁹ Gustave Huffel, *Economie Forestière* (1904), t.1, 127.

¹²⁰ François Bluche, *Dictionnaire du Grand Siècle* (Paris, 1990), article ‘Eaux et Forêts’, 516-517.

¹²¹ Jacob Van Klaveren, ‘Fiskalismus, Merkantilismus, Korruption. Drei Aspekte der Finanz- und Wirtschaftspolitik während des Ancien Régime’, *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und*

perspective, the embezzlement of public funds was a business transaction to be analysed in relation to broader aspects of the political economy such as fiscalism and mercantilism. Later studies turned to a contextualised, empirical approach, aiming to analyse ‘from within’ the perception and role of corruption in past societies, and the changing discourses that accompanied it.

The main problem encountered by historians of corruption as an historical concept is that of its elusive definition. For Joël Félix and Anne Dubet, it can be variously defined in relation to specific legal norms, or according to concepts of justice and fairness held in Christian morals, or again through precepts enshrined in canon law and natural law.¹²² Carefully avoiding a general, universal definition, they warned against “assessing the action of early-modern agents on the basis of a modern definition of corruption.”¹²³ Collections of case studies spanning wide geographical and chronological frames portrayed very diverse manifestations of the phenomenon, examining meanings and practices mindful of the time, place and political regime in which they occurred.¹²⁴ Taken together, these various approaches helped to define more accurately the dividing line between acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour of agents in the service of a prince or state. The common themes and characteristics that they mapped out will also guide our own analysis of the material generated by the judicial treatment of fraud and malpractice in the two *Réformations* that affected Languedoc and, more specifically, Quillan.

Functionalist interpretations

Searching for causes of the seemingly irrepressible nature of corruption in the past is an obvious question confronting historians. Functionalist interpretations were a popular and convenient way of explaining its universal occurrence and permanence through space and time: corruption endured because it had a manifest, or latent, usefulness. Whether in the

Wirtschaftsgeschichte, XLVII, 3 (1960), pp. 333-353; Arnold Heidenheimer, Michael Johnston, eds., *Political corruption: Concepts and contexts* (New Brunswick, London, 2002).

¹²² Joël Félix, Anne Dubet, eds., *The war within, Private interests and the fiscal state in Early Modern Europe* (Palgrave 2018), 9.

¹²³ Id., 4.

¹²⁴ Apart from Félix and Dubet’s *The war within*, see also: Emmanuel Kreike and William Chester Jordan, eds., *Corrupt Histories* (Rochester, 2004); Toon Kerkhoff et al., ‘Corruption and the rise of modern politics in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: a comparison between France, the Netherlands, Germany and England’, *Journal of Modern European History*, 11, 1 (2013), pp. 19-30; Sylvia Marton et al., *Moralité du pouvoir et corruption en France et en Roumanie, XVIIIe-XXe siècles* (Paris, 2017); Ronald Kroeze, et al., *Anticorruption in history: from antiquity to the modern era* (Oxford, 2018).

guise of noisy scandals or quietly festering practices, it was seen as a form of compensation for a perceived injustice or ill treatment. Given the unequal societies of the early modern context, corruption could be conceptualised as a useful social and political stabiliser, a corrective process that all but legitimised it. Contemporaries already used this kind of rationale as a political argument. In 1670, the *avocat général* argued against the part-removal of the *épices* of the *procureurs du roi* by invoking the fact that these rights allowed them to “subsister avec honneur: autrement, il est impossible qu’ils ne tombent dans la négligence et la prévarication [...] qu’ils ne cherchent à s’indemniser par des voies secrètes et honteuses et ne commettent des concussions dans lesquelles ils ne garderont aucune mesure.”¹²⁵ In the same vein, Jean Meyer asserted in his survey of French public service that inadequate income of the venal office amply justified their behaviour: in a system based on venality, corruption, he contended, represented a “contribution quasi légitime au débours initial.”¹²⁶

After his initial focus on the social history of France’s forestry *grands-mâîtres* in 1978, Jean-Claude Waquet turned to corruption as a general phenomenon, whereby it is more than anecdotal to observe this historian’s concomitant interest in forestry and corruption.¹²⁷ In this monograph, he analysed a series of high-profile cases of fraud and embezzlement in the administration of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Florence. For Waquet too, these practices represented a factor of social stability that allowed modest robe magistrates and administrators of intermediate spheres of Italian urban society to top up their financial resources, live according to their social aspirations, and create lasting familial dynasties. The leading administrative figures and princes followed a different, more political, rationale. They justified the permissiveness or severity of their responses to corruption by circuitous reasonings akin to casuistry. This strategy allowed them to “évacuer la dimension politique des abus, [...] laisser une certaine liberté aux employés, en particulier s’ils étaient issus de milieux distingués, et enfin [...] préserver, au moins officiellement, la dignité du prince.” Princes and political leaders were integral part of a vast “système moral de la corruption” that encompassed the whole polity, i.e. common fraudsters, officials, and the prince.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Quoted in Roland Mousnier, *La vénalité des offices sous Henri IV et Louis XIII* (Paris, 1971).

¹²⁶ Meyer, in Pinet, *Histoire de la fonction publique*, vol.2, 391.

¹²⁷ Jean-Claude Waquet, *De la corruption. Morale et pouvoir à Florence aux xvii^e et xviii^e siècles* (Paris, 1984).

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 206.

This whole-system view is an appealing approach for attempting to better grasp the phenomenon. Applied to forestry, one could thus assume a concatenation of fraudulent practices, reaching from the mendacious minister using his powers to consolidate his own position to the officer colluding with the local wood merchant because he was a close relative. Testing this assumption requires us to use a wide-ranging approach. The prosopographical profiling of the officers will therefore include the merchants, further complemented by examining the attitudes of the official envoys of the central administration, who were dispatched to Quillan to prosecute their offenses. Including the socio-psychological dimension will enrich the bare data of the prosopographical analysis. In his exploration of the concept of political disgrace, Julian Swann argued that “[T]o achieve a more balanced interpretation of political culture [than one based on discourse or structures] we are obliged to engage directly with ideas, events, and above all the hopes and fears of those who participated in them.”¹²⁹ Swann’s study underscores the political impact of notions such as public dishonour embedded in the value system of early modern societies. In this perspective, the dismissal from office of Quillan’s *maître particulier* in 1732 for grave “*prévarications*” was much more than a standard disciplinary measure leading to a formal change in the staffing of the *maîtrise*. As will be shown in chapter four, the social disgrace he and his family incurred triggered an expensive state-led operation, which affected the whole region. Considering the effect of symbolic values such as public trust, honor and shame adds an important dimension to our understanding of the multilayered connection between venality, clientage, and corruption. This insight can in turn shed light on the limitations that constrained the scope of the monarchy’s interventions in provincial affairs.

Another important aspect on the same theme came from cultural historians who have approached interpretations of historical corruption from the angle of gift exchange, office-buying or patronage.¹³⁰ Their research underscored the breadth of interpretations linked to this phenomenon. Just like patronage and clientelism, gift-giving was not objectionable in itself. In France and other European countries alike, gifts were essential and necessary

¹²⁹ Julian Swann, *Exile, Imprisonment, or Death, the politics of disgrace in Bourbon France, 1610-1789* (Oxford, 2017), 36.

¹³⁰ Further to the works cited in note 100, also: Marcel Mauss, ‘Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l’échange dans les sociétés archaïques’, *L’année sociologique*, I (1923-24), pp. 30-186; Arlette Jouanna, ‘Des réseaux d’amitié aux clientèles centralisées: les provinces et la Cour (France, XVIe–XVIIe s)’, in: Charles Giry-Deloison et Roger Mettam, eds., *Patronages et clientélismes 1550-1750 (France, Angleterre, Espagne, Italie)* (Lille, Londres, 1995), pp. 21-38; Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in sixteenth-century France* (Oxford, 2000).

contributions to the good functioning of early modern states. On the international scene, they oiled the communication processes of diplomacy. Inside, they rippled through the whole polity from individual subjects in the provinces to members of the court and ministry. In 1684, an official request from the *Secrétaire des ordres du roi* Phélypeaux de Châteauneuf asked Languedocian aristocrats for a gracious ‘gift’ of partridges to replenish the king’s depleted hunting grounds in Chambord, in return for which “les noms des donateurs seraient communiqués au souverain.”¹³¹ Analysis of the gifting concept was further refined by the aspect of intentionality. In her chapter on financier fraud in the Spanish monarchy, Anne Dubet spoke of the “casuistry of corruption,” playing on the uncertainties around the intention with which gifts were made.¹³² In forestry, the question of intentionality was straightforward. As the examples provided in chapter four will demonstrate, the main principle guiding the judges’ take on gift-exchanges, which had been denounced as dubious, was their role in enhancing the interests of the crown, financial or other.

Corruption and ‘modernisation’

Whilst remaining wary of teleological interpretations, historians were particularly preoccupied by the relationship between corruption and the process of ‘modernisation’ of the royal administration, and, closely related to it, the increasing separation between private interests and the public sphere. How far, they asked, did corruption signal a broader shift in norms, opposing a ‘pre-modern’, ‘face-to-face’ model driven by loyalty, trust, friendship (and its corollaries, nepotism, gift-giving and clientelism), and a bureaucratic system operating as an impersonal, rational-legal form of administration? In the context of the ‘fiscal state’ bent on securing financial resources for wars, Félix and Dubet suggested an evolution built upon ever more precise definitions of corruption.¹³³ In his analysis of the connection between historical corruption and political regimes, Kerkhoff observed a dramatic “shift in debates on and perceptions of corruption [that] occurred somewhere during the «long nineteenth century» as a result of modernisation processes.” In Kerkhoff’s view, broad conceptual changes led from “the early modern plurality of values to clashing political ideologies in modern times.”¹³⁴ Beyond their diversity, these approaches all

¹³¹ Quoted in Arlette Jouanna, *Le devoir de révolte; La noblesse française et la gestation de l'État moderne (1559-1661)* (Paris, 1989) 397.

¹³² Anne Dubet, ‘The Spanish monarchy and financier fraud during the early eighteenth century: a morality of favours and negotiation’, in: Félix and Dubet, *The war within*, pp. 71-97.

¹³³ Félix and Dubet, *The war within*, 3.

¹³⁴ Kerkhoff, *Corruption*, 21.

converge on the idea that, firstly, the change from personal influence to impersonal rules of procedure was anything but a linear trajectory between two well-defined poles, and that, secondly, the separation between the two spheres never fully occurred. Based on the premise that in early modern administrative regimes, seeking to increase private profit was perfectly compatible with exercising a public function, the two paradigms were connected through a complex and fluid zone, where both happily overlapped.

These assumptions raise the critical question of pinpointing the moment, and the trigger, of the paradigmatic change. Félix and Dubet sought to detect “when and why social actors started considering the ethos of service and the rewards of gifts as the intolerable expression of elite domination and exclusive access to money and honour.”¹³⁵ They also enquired “how and why the common culture about corruption and its repression came to be contested and considered as the ideology of an archaic and aristocratic ethos detrimental to both the interests of the ruler and the nation.”¹³⁶ In this vein, William Doyle addressed the question of the trigger for momentous changes in social and political culture by comparing venality of *ancien régime* France and ‘Old Corruption’ in England.¹³⁷ After centuries of being accepted as unavoidable necessities and well-established practices integral to the French and English political systems, Doyle asked whether the revolutionary process, or Edmund Burke’s ‘Economical Reforms’, sufficed to explain why these long-established practices could abruptly be conceptualised as ‘corrupt’ and rejected as unacceptable. He argued that the decade-long spectacle of diminishing effectiveness before the eyes of an ever more vigilant and perceptive public opinion (especially in the military spheres) had in fact long eroded the basis of their acceptability. Far from being the actual triggers of the shift, England’s ‘Economical Reforms’ and the French Revolution had only been part of a longer process which made it possible to conceive that even “the most glaring abuses or anomalies, including venality” could be removed.¹³⁸

The trigger for change need not be as dramatic as a Revolution or a bundle of radical reforms. For the fiscal sector, Félix and Dubet saw crises and conflicts in general as creative processes with an inherent potential to depart from long-established norms and practices. “Tensions, at different levels of analysis,” they argued, “paved the way for new

¹³⁵ Id., 4.

¹³⁶ Id., 9-10.

¹³⁷ William Doyle, ‘Changing notions of public corruption, c.1770-c.1850’, in: Kreike and Jordan, *Corrupt Histories*, pp. 83-95.

¹³⁸ Id., 90.

perspectives on governance of finance, and a willingness to engage with the costs of corruption.”¹³⁹ This notion of ‘creative crisis’ invites us to ask how far eighteenth-century *Réformations Forestières* contributed to a paradigmatic change in the service discipline of the officers. Were they effective anti-corruption measures? Our concluding chapter will discuss how far the *Réformation* of the 1730s in Quillan signalled a watershed between a ‘pre-modern’ notion (which left much room for political pragmatism and a flexible approach to corrupt practices), and a depersonalised system of control that was better equipped to reduce opportunities for fraudulent practices in forestry.

Research aims

A basic assumption underlies this thesis: Colbert’s reforms represented a promising window of opportunity to achieve a fundamental and durable system change in forestry, but in practice, its impact was short-lived. In a first approximation, his intervention in provincial forestry matters appeared as a conspicuous assertion of royal authority over the owners and users of the forests. The purge and streamlining of forestry personnel, and the tighter mechanisms to control their activity, appeared to set forestry practice on to a rational and more efficient footing. How can we evaluate the long-term success of these broad policy objectives?

A centre-led audit operation (*Réformation*) applied sixty years after Colbert’s reforms to the Pyrenean forestry district of Quillan will serve as a test case to assess their impact on the professional ethos and the practices of provincial forestry officers at middle levels of the hierarchy. This analysis will be articulated around two main, interlinked methodological pillars: firstly, a prosopographical examination of Quillan’s forestry officers, with a particular focus on their social and professional status, their work practices, and their relationships with their hierarchical superiors and with their immediate social environment; secondly, an analysis of their professional misdemeanours, through a close reading of the judicial material produced in the *Réformation* process. The results of these explorations will serve as a basis to assess the long-term consequences of Colbert’s reforms, and to detect the strategies used by subsequent governments to uphold his promises. While no simple and conclusive answers can be expected, it is hoped that this discussion opens the way for further research in eighteenth-century forestry politics, as an

¹³⁹ Félix and Dubet, *The war within*, 7.

analytical tool to better understand the complex issue of royal authority in the context of fast-changing relations between the centre and the periphery.

Methodological challenges

Prosopography has become a well-established and much-used means of elaborating the collective profile of a specific group of individuals linked by common characteristics.¹⁴⁰ Michel Cassan's research sets a clear methodological standard for the prosopographical method: to identify common characteristics of the group, the factors situating it relative to the state, and to the town, and to detect signs, if any, of an "identité de groupe."¹⁴¹ To help evaluate the social position of a corpus based on contemporary standards, Cassan advocated the use of *marc d'or* and *capitation* tariffs. These analytical tools could help to get a better 'feel' for the group's social status, because they were indexed on a mix of financial and symbolic parameters associated with each office, profession or social group. Our study largely rests on a combination of the classic prosopographical method aimed at a collective profiling of the group, and individual biographies. This mixed approach allows us to identify common characteristics without losing sight of personal factors, especially those linked to competing social networks or the unregulated and emotional battleground of local urban politics. This approach however comes with its particular challenges.

As a statistical method, prosopography requires, ideally, a large corpus, a long time span, and a degree of homogeneity, all pre-conditions that constitute a priori a methodological challenge for this project. With twenty-eight individuals, our core corpus is comparatively small.¹⁴² For comparison, Caroline Le Mao's corpus of Bordeaux *parlementaires* included 316 entries (between 1643 and 1723),¹⁴³ and Meyzie studied 433 *présidial* magistrates (between 1665 and 1810).¹⁴⁴ A larger corpus of forestry officers covering a selection of

¹⁴⁰ Françoise Autrand, 'Prosopographie et Histoire de l'Etat', in: Gerhard Ritter and Rudolf Vierhaus, eds., *Aspects de la recherche historique en France et en Allemagne, tendances et méthodes* (Göttingen, 1981), pp. 43-53. Other works on prosopography include: Christophe Charle, Jean Nagle e.a., *Prosopographie des élites françaises 16e-20e siècles, Guide de Recherche* (Paris, 1980); Neithard Bulst, 'Objets et méthodes de la prosopographie', in: Jean-Philippe Genêt, Günther Lottes, *L'Etat moderne et les élites, XIIIe-XVIIIe siècles, apports et limites de la méthode prosopographique* (Paris, 1996), pp. 469-484.

¹⁴¹ Cassan, 'Pour une enquête', 109.

¹⁴² See corpus overview in Annexe 3 for names and details.

¹⁴³ Caroline Le Mao, *Parlement et Parlementaires: Bordeaux au Grand Siècle* (Seyssel, 2007), 290.

¹⁴⁴ Meyzie, *Les illusions perdues*, introduction.

maîtrises particulières would satisfy the numbers' requirement for a meaningful statistical treatment, but this would vastly exceed the scope of this thesis.

The combination of a statistical and a nominative approach, however, can turn the small size of our sample into a methodological asset. For Neithard Bulst, the inclusion of biographical details enriches general results apprehended through statistical computation alone.¹⁴⁵ Patrice Poujade's study of the Pyrenean tradesmen greatly benefitted from this dual approach. "La prosopographie et la micro-histoire biographique sont, malgré leurs différences, deux voies complémentaires qui peuvent se nourrir en permanence et permettent de jongler avec les différences d'échelles, d'aller du groupe à l'individu et vice-versa, d'articuler le singulier (d'une expérience) et le collectif."¹⁴⁶ The inclusion of qualitative information allows us to follow individual careers in their entirety, and glimpse into the social foundations and the limitations of the professional choices available to them. It can lead to a more differentiated representation of the group's collective identity, which for Michel Cassan is intrinsically multilayered. In the case of small-town magistrates, a collective identity could be determined by "des voies professionnelles dans le cadre de l'auditoire, intellectuelles avec la production de textes, et culturelles par une participation active à la sociabilité savante et érudite des petites villes."¹⁴⁷ Bulst especially underlined the insights this approach can provide on social interactions inside and outside the actual corpus. It can highlight "leurs oppositions, leurs divergences, leurs conflits et leurs compromis,"¹⁴⁸ and reveal the causes of fractures which, as in the example above, could split the group's cohesiveness and impede the smooth functioning of the unit. To include such elements of dissonance into the prosopographical 'questionnaire' can reveal the social, cultural and emotional realities that underpinned dynamic processes observable at the level of the whole group.

Another hurdle for using the prosopographical method in this study is the heterogeneous character of a *maîtrise* in terms of personnel. Contrary to well-defined, coherent institutional or professional bodies united by common characteristics (such as the *Chambre*

¹⁴⁵ Neithard Bulst, 'L'histoire des assemblées d'Etats en France et la recherche prosopographique XIVE - milieu XVIIe siècle', in: Autrand, *Prosopographie et genèse*, pp. 171-184.

¹⁴⁶ Patrice Poujade, *Une société marchande; le commerce et ses acteurs dans les Pyrénées modernes* (Toulouse, 2008).

¹⁴⁷ Cassan, 'Pour une enquête', 105.

¹⁴⁸ Neithard Bulst, 'L'histoire des assemblées', 177.

de l'Edit studied by Stéphane Capot),¹⁴⁹ each post in a *maîtrise particulière* carried its own distinctive professional characteristics. There is no evidence that *maîtres particuliers*, *lieutenants*, *procureurs du roi*, *garde-marteaux* or *greffiers*, ever formed a formal *compagnie* along the model of their hierarchical superiors, the *grands-mâtres*.¹⁵⁰ Attempting to define the collective identity of officers who demonstrated little *esprit de corps*, and who left little evidence of active correspondence with each other, appears at first glance contrived and artificial. Furthermore, in our case the composition of the group changed mid-way through our period, with the creation in 1701 of the office of *receveur particulier*. At first glance, then, our target group presented a composite character, which caused some researchers to doubt the suitability of *maîtrise* personnel as a research object. “L’ambiguïté de la notion de personnel forestier, jointe à la faible homogénéité du personnel forestier royal, constitue [...] un obstacle pour la définition d’une problématique originale.”¹⁵¹

I argue however that this outward heterogeneity does not preclude the search for defining a collective identity for royal foresters, provided one considers differences in professional characteristics as subordinate to the common, overarching specificities and challenges that united all of its members. Le Mao’s diverse categories of *parlementaires* were united by their common membership of a prestigious court, and a similar involvement with vast and risky financial operations connected Françoise Bayard’s disparate body of financiers.¹⁵² What bonded France’s *forestiers moyens* were the material specificity of their object (forests, wood, waterways) and the separate, unique nature of the jurisdiction that framed their activity. Moreover, in the eyes of their contemporaries, *maîtrise* officers presented themselves as a cohesive whole. In official correspondence - and contrary to the personalised references concerning *grands-mâtres* - the administrative prose often referred to them as an operational entity. When commissioner Louis de Froidour addressed the officers of the newly-established *maîtrise* of Saint-Gaudens, he reminded them that they were “tous solidairement responsables des intérêts du roi [et] ils doivent être parfaitement unis dans les fonctions de leurs charges et doivent suppléer les uns aux autres en telle sorte

¹⁴⁹ Stéphane Capot, ‘Les magistrats de la Chambre de l’Edit de Languedoc (1579-1679)’, *Annales du midi*, 208, 213 (1996), pp. 63-88.

¹⁵⁰ BNF, Nouvelles Acquisitions Françaises, ms 5833, ‘Registre des délibérations de Mrs les grands maîtres des Eaux et Forests de France’, (2 janvier 1727-19 décembre 1771).

¹⁵¹ Jean Boissière, Anne-Marie Cocula, e.a., *Histoire des forêts françaises. Guide de recherches* (Editions CNRS, groupe d’histoire des forêts françaises, s.d.), 162.

¹⁵² Françoise Bayard, *Le monde des financiers au XVIIe siècle* (Paris, 1988).

que le service se fasse.”¹⁵³ One century later, the complaints of the *cahiers de doléances* of 1789 rarely singled out a specific category, aiming instead en-bloc at “les officiers.” Beyond its diverse professional specificities, our sample derives its homogeneity from its common object, and from its perception as a unit endowed with a clear and coherent function and place in the kingdom’s political, social and institutional space.

Sources

To paraphrase Natalie Davis, archival sources represent stories told by people, rather than being an objective reflection of the past.¹⁵⁴ In this sense, researching French forestry institutions of the past confronts us with a familiar problem. There is an abundance of forestry material of a very diverse nature spread between the *Archives Nationales* and ninety or so *Archives Départementales*, but this rich material is overwhelmingly one-sided, reflecting official concerns. The personal nature of some of Froidour’s legacy is a notable exception, which partly explains why he has been such a popular topic of investigation for historians. The G7 series of the *Archives Nationales* are a good example of this official bias: official correspondence between the *intendant des finances* with *Eaux-et-Forêts* in his remit with various provincial interlocutors, petitions, complaints and mémoires from *maîtrise* staff mostly concerned with modalities of their office, *Arrêts* and *Ordonnances*, requests for cutting authorisation from various forest users, sylvicultural and technical reports, wood sales, forestry court records, or again problems in the forests linked to military activity, and much more.¹⁵⁵ The forestry archives found in Paris and those of the three *Archives Départementales* covering this thesis have clearly been preserved because of their relevance for the contemporary concerns of the state and its administrative apparatus.

In addition to the lack of personal documents, the gaps in series of sales records or notarial registers impaired the accuracy of statistical evaluations. Furthermore, numeric data such as sales volumes or *gages* could be defined in different ways (if defined at all), and values had at times to be inferred or reconstructed. These source-related flaws can be somewhat corrected by applying a measure of intuitive interpretation. This is particularly important

¹⁵³ Quoted in Bartoli, *Louis de Froidour*, 73.

¹⁵⁴ Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford, 1995).

¹⁵⁵ Suzanne Clémencet has provided a useful index of the G7 series in AN, ‘Fonds du Contrôle Général des Finances, Inventaire analytique des articles G7, 1329-1370 (1677-1731)’, (Languedoc: 1349-1350).

when attempting to infer broader meanings, or creating over-riding categories from the formulaic style of legal texts, such as case instruction, witness auditions, supporting documents, sentences and appeals.

The nature of our sources were threefold, online, Parisian, and provincial. Particularly helpful was the online availability of parish registers. For Quillan, the registers were nearly complete for the period from February 1665 to November 1742, with only minor gaps (from 1689 to 1692).¹⁵⁶ Genealogical details have been obtained from commercial sources such as Geneanet, but whenever possible they have been crosschecked with information from archive-based sources.

The overwhelming majority of our paper-based sources were spread between Paris and the south. In Paris, the *Bibliothèque Nationale* (especially the manuscripts section and the Cinq-Cents-Colbert collection) holds papers and legal texts relative to Colbert's *Grandes Réformations*, and some of his correspondence with Froidour. Because of our focus on the later part of the period under study, they have only been partially used. At the *Archives Nationales*, apart from the sections AD and E dedicated to official forestry acts, the G series were particularly prolific, especially the motley collection of papers, letters and *requêtes* found in G7. Also useful were the V1 series for office provisions, Q for the royal domain, P for the all-important financial aspects of the office, as well as some items in the *Marine* series.

The nature of this project required us however to prioritise provincial sources. Our choice of Quillan was covered by three *Archives Départementales* located in Toulouse, Montpellier, and Carcassonne. With their different contents, levels of digitisation and accessibility, they complemented each other very effectively.

The particularly rich hoard of forestry material deposited in Toulouse is heavily biased towards the earlier period of our time frame.¹⁵⁷ Spread between the *Archives*

¹⁵⁶ Registres paroissiaux, paroisse Notre-Dame, Quillan, Décès & Mariages & Naissances. ADAD, 100NUM/AC304/1E1, Quillan, (1654-1699); 100NUM/AC304/1E2, Quillan, (1700-1731); 100NUM/AC304/1E3, Quillan, (1731-1746); 100NUM/AC304/1E4, Quillan, (1748-1756); 100NUM/AC304/1E6, Quillan, (1756-1775); 100NUM/5E304/3, Quillan, (1760-1769); 100NUM/5E165/3, Ginoules, (1770-1792).

¹⁵⁷ Though dated and requiring a key to read older references, (*Table de concordance des cotes*), Henri de Coincy's *Les Archives Toulousaines de la Réformation Générale des Eaux et Forêts* (Besançon, 1922-3) is still a useful guide, including all the published work of Louis de Froidour.

Départementales and the *Bibliothèque d'Etude du Patrimoine*, the *Fonds Froidour* is a rich and thematically and geographically coherent resource. It holds a remarkably complete documentation of Froidour's *Réformation* operations in Languedoc. The registers 8B 001 to 8B 034, and 1A 10 to 1A 17 contain summaries and syntheses of the whole process, including the establishment of the Quillan *maîtrise*.¹⁵⁸ Crammed inside approximately 2,500 individual dossiers, this documentation provides a step-by-step coverage of Froidour's reform activity for the whole *Grande Maîtrise* from 1666 to 1673, but also includes precise descriptions of the forests, complete with maps, charts and other figurative illustrations.

Montpellier's role as a former seat of the *Chambre des Aides et Comptes* explains the predominantly financial nature of the documents held at the *Archives Départementales de l'Hérault*. Their 1BP series keeps some documentation on forestry accounts, service certificates, or officers' remuneration. Interspersed with these financial papers was judicial material preserved from the second Quillan *Réformation*. A comparison with the Toulouse series shows that a number of duplicates found their way to the Montpellier *Cour des Comptes*, while others were unique copies.

The *Archives Départementales de l'Aude* in Carcassonne are home to an invaluable and little-explored cache of forestry material, mostly related to the *Réformation* of Quillan in the 1730s and 1740s. Its rich 63C collection holds numerous forestry-related documents, records of statutory inspection visits or reports of forest *gardes*. Much data could be extracted from the wood sales accounts (63C 31 to 63C 37), nearly complete between 1678 and 1733, except for the period 1691 to 1704. The bulk of our information on officer's professional practice is based on the legal papers, notes and supportive documents produced in the course of the Quillan's *Réformation* trials (63C 63 to 63C 65, 63C 73 to 78). The notarial records of Carcassonne's 3E series were particularly informative. The registers left by three notaries of Quillan covering our period were Bertrand Siau, Michel Roillet and M. Laran, with a handful of minor gaps, and a longer silence between 1713 and 1719.

In terms of communal archives on the other hand, Quillan yielded only sparse information, due to the fires that destroyed its town hall in 1715, and again in 1791. The *compoix* of 1713 and 1731 would have been an important complementary source of information for

¹⁵⁸ The Quillan papers are in 8B140-156 (dossiers), and 8B024 to 027 (registers).

wealth and property data. They were erroneously catalogued as located at the *Archives Départementales* in Carcassonne, but they are still housed in the current *Mairie* of Quillan. As they could unfortunately not be viewed,¹⁵⁹ I relied on listings and observations extracted from these documents, which have been compiled by local historian André Marcel.¹⁶⁰

This thesis is divided into four main chapters. Firstly, the preceding literature survey has clarified why a dominant narrative based on the legacy of Colbert's interventions in forestry has long impeded a review of hardened orthodoxies on early modern forestry. Chapter two will present the general geographical, socio-political and institutional framework of seventeenth and eighteenth-century forestry administration, with special reference to Languedoc and the forestry district of Quillan. The next two chapters constitute the core of my research work. Chapter three will analyse the career profiles, geographical and socio-economic origins, networks and patronage links of Quillan's foresters, alongside the strategies they developed to maintain their position among the urban elites. Chapter four is dedicated to specific aspects of their professional practice, as well as the governmental responses to complaints of professional negligence and collusion with fraudulent wood merchants. In my concluding section, I will reflect on the political meanings that might be inferred from these findings.

The prosopographical part of this study comprises all officers who worked in the Quillan *maîtrise* at any one time between 1673 (when Colbert's new forestry regime in the Languedoc started) and 1745 (when final sentence on Quillan's officers was pronounced), and for whom sufficient information could be found. The judicial examination of officer misdemeanour in chapter four, covers a more restricted time frame, from 1721 to 1736, but for comparative purposes, some data from outside this narrow chronological and spatial frame will also be used.

¹⁵⁹ This was due to the travel restrictions imposed by the 2020 Covid-pandemic.

¹⁶⁰ André Marcel, *Quillan, capitale de la haute-vallée de l'Aude, et du piémont pyrénéen audois* (Quillan, 2012). For details of municipal governance, Marcel relied on a manuscript by Louis Amiel, the nineteenth-century descendant of a prominent wood merchant family of Quillan and a local historian. (ADAD, 2J84). Another useful source for the local history of Quillan is Paul Chabrol, 'Histoire de la maîtrise de Quillan du 16e au 18e siècle', *Revue Forestière Française*, 1 (1959), pp. 1-18.

CHAPTER TWO

FRAMEWORKS OF *ANCIEN REGIME* FORESTRY POLITICS

A land of opportunities?

With its two *généralités* of Toulouse and Montpellier, Languedoc was France's largest province (41,150 km²), but because of its important highland component, it was relatively sparsely populated. Languedoc's 1,700,000 inhabitants, distributed throughout 2,864 *communautés d'habitants*, represented approximately 6.5 % of France's total population.

¹⁶¹ The region's economy, mostly based on textile and agricultural production (including wood), contributed 6 to 9 % of the nation's total revenue. ¹⁶² The *Grande Maîtrise des Eaux-et-Forêts* of Toulouse was only one of many royal and provincial institutions with which the region was equipped. At the start of Colbert's forestry reforms of the 1660s, the area formally within the remit of the *Grande Maîtrise* was enormous, approximately twice as large as that of Languedoc, but only its central part was actively managed by that royal institution. The Alpine zone east of the Rhône, and the western flatlands of Guyenne, had only a nominal forestry infrastructure, and Roussillon, which had just been annexed after the *paix des Pyrénées* of 1659, was exempted from its jurisdiction. After the reconfiguration of the forestry map in 1689, the reduced portion remaining under the administration of the Toulouse *Grande Maîtrise* broadly overlapped with the contours of Languedoc's two *généralités*.

In geographical terms, the province was characterised by its heterogeneity, and above all its dependency on wood resources located in the higher grounds. (Map 1) ¹⁶³ Deforestation, evidenced since neolithic times, transformed large chunks of the primary forest into low-growing shrubland, and as populations and their needs for cultivated lands increased, the forests progressively retreated to the foothills and higher zones of the Pyrénées and Massif

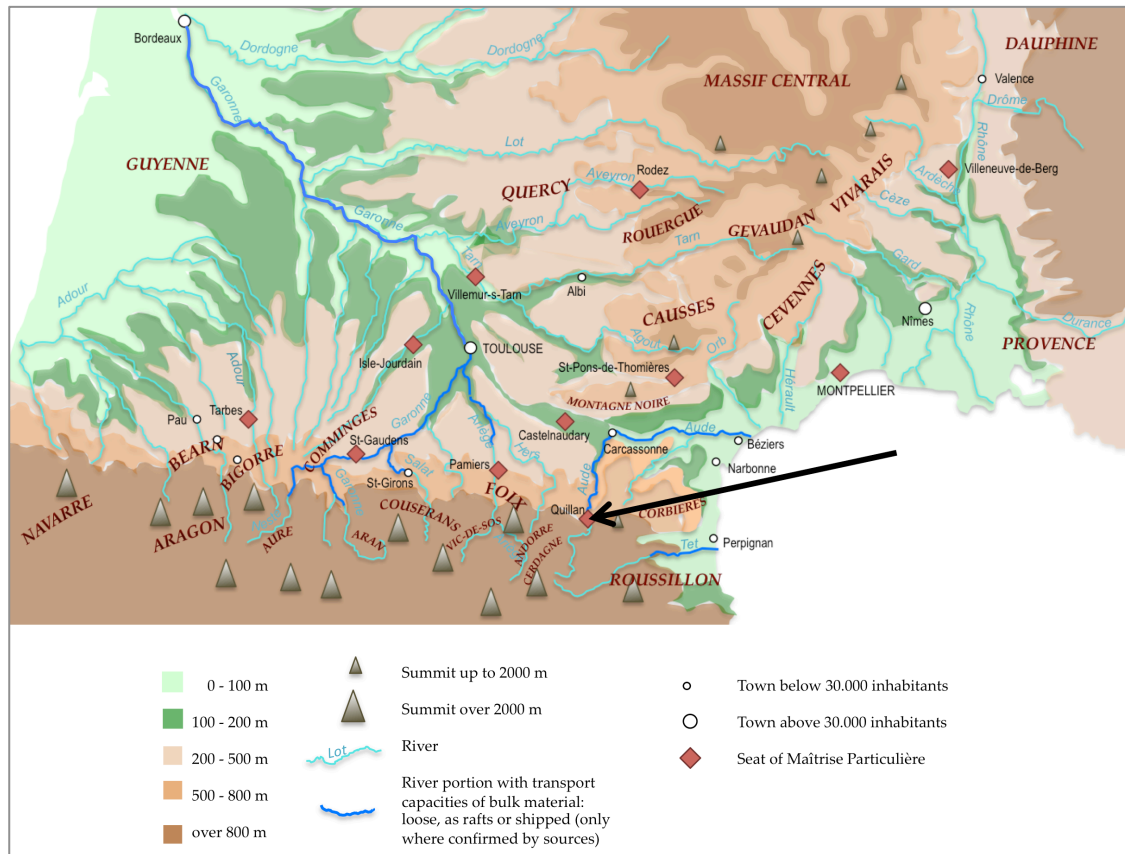
¹⁶¹ Figures of 1785. See Elie Pélaquier, *Atlas historique de la province du Languedoc* (Montpellier, 2009), 9. According to intendant Basville, *Mémoires*, 39, the province counted 1,566,038 'souls'.

¹⁶² Beik, *Absolutism*, 34.

¹⁶³ Much information about geographical aspects of early modern Languedoc can be gleaned throughout the monumental work of Ernest Roschach, archivist and historian of Toulouse. His ten-volume *Histoire générale de Languedoc* (Toulouse, 1872-92) was based on and complemented the works of dom Claude Devic et Dom J. Vaissette. See especially vol.XIV (1643-1789).

Central. By the sixteenth century, what remained of them had turned into hotly disputed economic and political assets.

Map 1 France's southwest: natural regions



The wider region to which the Toulouse *Grande Maîtrise* belonged comprises four distinct natural zones: two highland systems - the Pyrénées and the southern outcrops of the Massif Central - and two lowland areas. The flat open country and low hills of Haut-Languedoc, west of Toulouse, overlap roughly with the Atlantic-bound hydrographic system left of the Garonne. In these sedimentary, largely deforested plains, a thriving cereal-based economy developed thanks to fertile, well-irrigated soils, and a relatively mild oceanic climate. To the east, the Bas-Languedoc was similarly deforested, but of a distinctly Mediterranean character. It formed a broad corridor along the coast, particularly propitious for migratory flows and long-distance trade. Its agrarian economy was based on wine-growing and olive plantations, both well adapted to poorer soils and a semi-arid climate characterised by rare

but violent precipitations. Main towns like Montpellier, Béziers or Narbonne were important centres of textile production, reliant on agricultural resources from the southern Massif Central, notably the terrace-cultivated mulberry trees for the manufacturing of silk. Wood supplies from the east Pyrenean plateaus arrived by the river Aude, and from the 1680s also the “*Canal Royal de la jonction des mers*,” a spectacular engineering project carried out by Pierre-Paul Riquet .¹⁶⁴

In the *mémoires* he compiled in 1697, intendant Basville described the two flatland areas as opposing each other “par la qualité des Terres qu’ils portent, par le génie & par le naturel même de leurs Habitans.”¹⁶⁵ In Basville’s view, the natural fertility of the Toulousian plains had ‘produced’ a people who were “grossiers, peu laborieux, & ont fait peu d’industrie.” By contrast, in the more challenging terrain of Bas-Languedoc, he saw people “pleins d’esprit, d’activité, d’industrie [...] propres au Commerce, aux Arts & aux Manufactures,” but whose preference for financially profitable activities prevented from engaging in “Lettres & Sciences.”¹⁶⁶ While Basville’s views were based on questionable pre-conceptions and generalisations, his description of the region’s natural resources rests on verifiable facts. Through a combination of climatic, geographical, economic and political factors, by the end of the eighteenth century, Languedoc as a whole was characterised by the paucity and fragile nature of its forests and wood resources.

Even more credible are the observations of commissioner Louis de Froidour recorded in his numerous reports and letters. When Colbert sent him to Toulouse to oversee the forestry reforms in the kingdom’s southwest, he scoured the upper valleys of the Garonne and its tributaries all the way to the Spanish border, guided by local *maîtrise* officers and experienced wood merchants. With this particular mission, Colbert had the central Pyrenean heartland firmly in his sights, hoping to find abundant supplies for his ambitious naval programme. Froidour’s previous experience managing Mazarin’s estate and as *procureur de Réformation* for the forests of the Parisian basin was limited to broadleaf systems of the northern plains and hills. The mountain forests of the Pyrénées were as unknown to him as to Colbert or the other decision-makers in the capital. From the

¹⁶⁴ In 1671, Colbert sent Louis de Froidour to check on the progress of the works on the Canal. He compiled his observations in his “Lettre à Mr. Barrillon d’Amoncourt contenant la relation et description des travaux qui se font en Languedoc pour la communication des deux mers”, (Toulouse, 1672). This work can be found in manuscrit 663 of the *Bibliothèque Municipale* of Toulouse.

¹⁶⁵ Basville, *Mémoires*, 39.

¹⁶⁶ Id., 41.

foothills south of Toulouse to the summits near the Spanish border, Froidour encountered a typical vertical zoning of species, resulting from a combination of climatic and biophysical influences and century-long human activity. On lower grounds, beech and oak stands were mixed with hazel, lime, and elm, followed by mixed stands of beech and silver fir, sometimes interspersed with pine. Higher up, in the subalpine zone above 2,000 m, firs became the dominant species, but their exploitation was often impeded by access difficulties and lack of overland routes suitable for bulk transport. The *hêtraies-sapinières* of the middle zone were of a particular economic importance.¹⁶⁷ They provided building material and firewood for many local communities as well as charcoal for forges and glassworks, whereby the relative proportions of fir and beech varied according to the intended purpose.¹⁶⁸ Many of the royal forests were located in this intermediate beech-fir zone. In the district of Quillan, productive forests were concentrated in the Sault plateau, Donnezan and Fenouillèdes, all within thirty kilometres from the seat. (Map 2) As these forests were now also coveted by the naval authorities as a source of naval-grade timber, the promotion of fir at the expense of beech was one of Froidour's priorities.

At higher levels, the forest had to make space for pastoral activity, which over time created and maintained flat highland meadows inserted between snowy surrounding peaks and deeply incised upper valleys of Garonne, Ariège, Aude, and their tributaries.¹⁶⁹ They served as summer pastures for “quantitté de bestiaux de toutte sorte” which, as Froidour recognised, constituted “toutte la richesse de ce pays.”¹⁷⁰ Most Pyrenean communities combined the rearing of sheep, goats, mules and sometimes cattle, with some grain cultivation in the narrow valleys. After the spring thaw, French and Catalan transhumant herdsmen drove enormous communal flocks along ancient routes to graze on these high grassy *estives*, and across the border on the corresponding ‘plàs’ of the Spanish side. This transborder activity was regulated by elaborate rules and codes of practice involving a high degree of consultation and collaboration between the pastoral communities. What Froidour also realised to his dismay was that this essential component of the mountain economy also

¹⁶⁷ On forests and metal production, see for example Jérôme Bonhôte, *Forges et forêts dans les Pyrénées ariégeoises: pour une histoire de l'environnement* (Aspet, 1998); Catherine Verna, *L'industrie au village: essai de micro-histoire (Arles-sur-Tech, XIVe et XVe siècles)* (Paris, 2017).

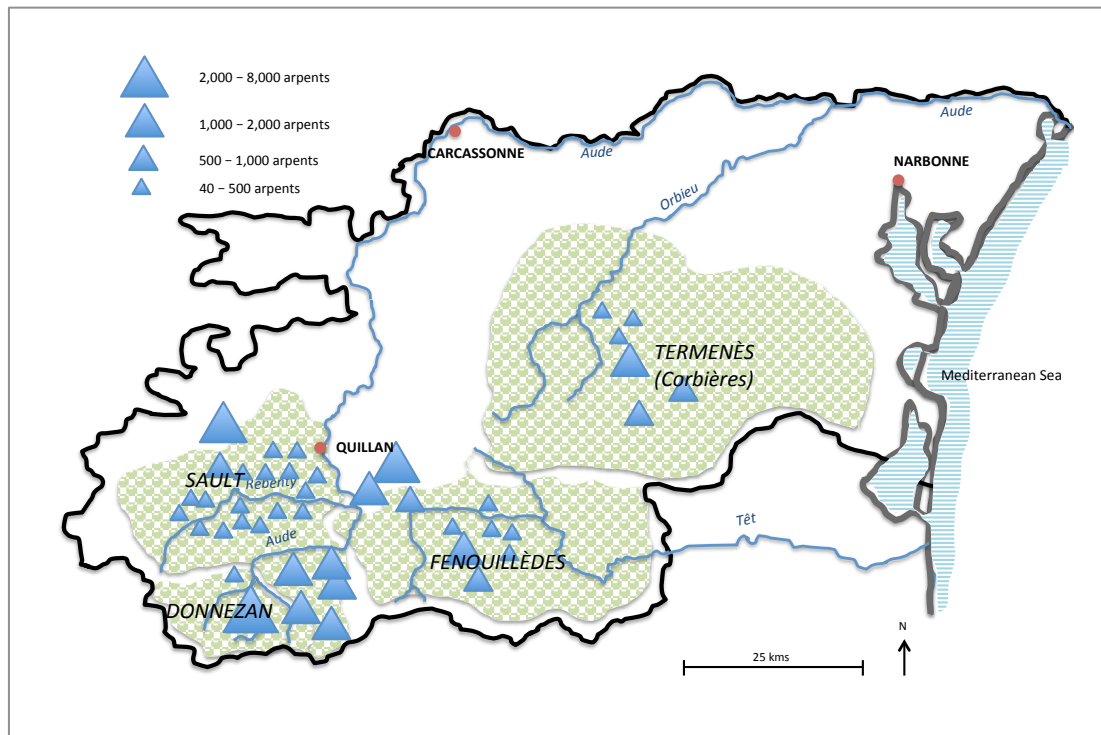
¹⁶⁸ Broadly speaking, beech was favoured as ordinary firewood and for making charcoal, used especially in metalworks. Fir was best suited for building needs and naval constructions. (See Fruhauf, *Forêt et Société*, 63-64).

¹⁶⁹ Out of many: Didier Galop, *La forêt, l'homme et le troupeau dans les Pyrénées, 6000 ans d'histoire de l'environnement entre Garonne et Méditerranée, contribution palynologique* (Toulouse, 1998).

¹⁷⁰ Castéran, *Les Pyrénées Centrales*, 37.

included forest-grazing, the scourge of any “officier des forests qui en ayme la conservation.”¹⁷¹

Map 2 Royal forests in the forestry district of Quillan



The forests of the Quillan district are a particularly good example of the integrated, wood-based economy of the Pyrenean communities. They provided the region with oak and beech timber for constructions, lower-quality beech to make charcoal for the local forges, and various woods for fencing, farming tools or household utensils. The top ends of firs were used for making devices to carry goods on horse or mule back. Boxwood served to manufacture combs, a small but thriving local product that sustained a number of Quillan artisans. On his first visit to the Quillan district in 1668, Froidour identified some of its forests as a promising source for the navy. The royal forest of Caudiès, he reported, well furnished in arsenal-grade, straight-growing firs of two to three hundred years of age, was well suited for building masts for larger ships, and in neighbouring Comminges (controlled

¹⁷¹ Id., 63.

by the *maîtrise* of Saint-Gaudens), he predicted that the forests were “suffisantes pour fournir des bois à toute les flottes du roi, lorsquelles seront rétablies et bien ménagées.”¹⁷²

A key aspect of the wood-based economy of the province was its hydrographic system. Some of its rivers represented vital carrier belts for timber and stone from the upper valleys to the plains (Map 3). Floatable rivers like the Aude or Garonne, well equipped with port infrastructures suitable for the construction of timber rafts, were significant contributors to the regional economy.¹⁷³ Based on a longstanding technique, timber rafting was a perilous operation demanding skilled workers (*radeliers*).¹⁷⁴ This activity provided sheep-farmers with additional, seasonal work as fluvial mariners, woodcutters or raft-builders. The Garonne and its tributaries, which could thus transport timber and other woods from the high country of Comminges and Val d’Aran, were a crucial factor for the prosperity of Toulouse. Further east, the Aude, floatable from Escouloubre (thirty-five kilometres upstream of Quillan) have supplied the Mediterranean towns and production centres at least since the thirteenth century. Flowing between Garonne and Aude, the Ariège was unsuited for this kind of timber transport, but the presence of metal ore and abundant forests in its basin led to the multiplication of forges and furnaces. This provided employment in mining, metal production, charcoal-making, sawmills, or the transport of metal products. An essential feature of Pyrenean economy, the metalworks were concentrated in specific valleys, like those of Vicdessos. There, charcoal making, mining and metalworks exacted a particularly high toll on the surrounding forests. In one way or another, the forests played a central role for the entire mountain economy – as well as for the fiscal solvency of its numerous communities.

Froidour recognised the vast potential of the mountain forests he had been commissioned to manage, and he deplored the state of degradation in which he had found them. “Ces forêts sont toutes en très mauvais état : un quart absolument dénaturé, défriché et réduit en culture [...]; un quart réduit en misérables broussailles par les excessifs délits que l'on y a faits et par les abrutissements des bestiaux, [...] et la moitié restante est en bois, mais

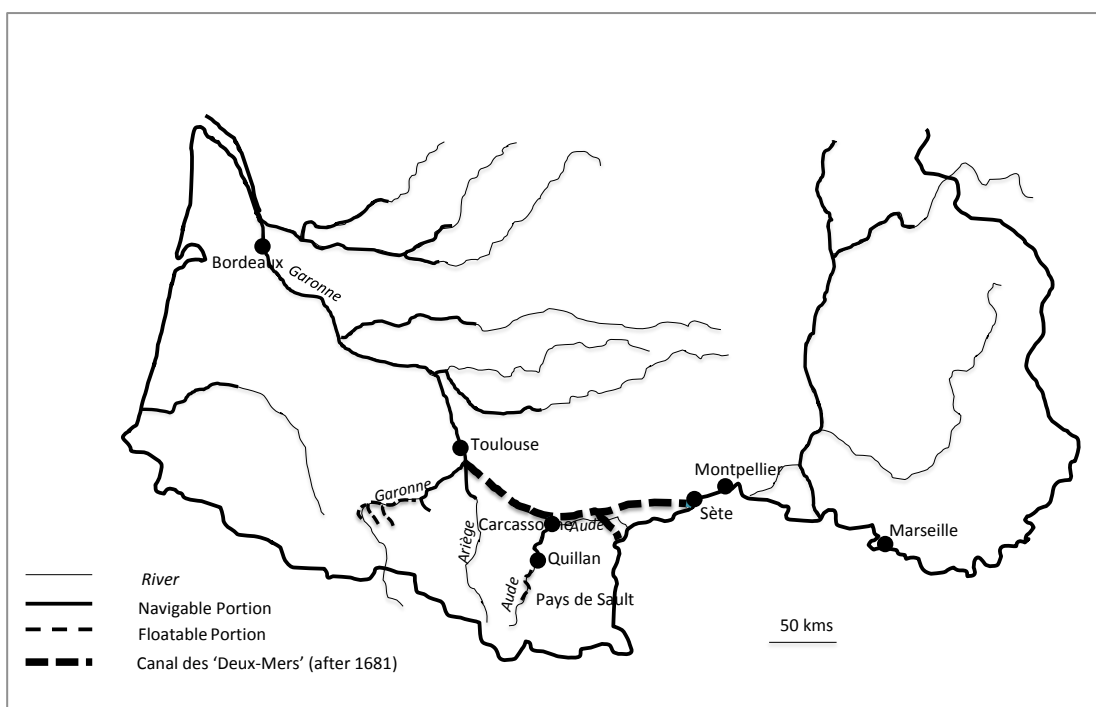
¹⁷² ADHG, B, Quillan, dossier A2, ‘Procès-verbal de réformation, Quillan, 8 mai 1670’.

¹⁷³ River transportation of heavy materials (timber, stone) was a crucial aspect for the provisioning of Paris from the rivers Yonne and Seine. See Jérôme Buridant, ‘Flottage des bois et gestion forestière: l’exemple du Bassin parisien, du XVIe au XIXe siècle’, *Revue Forestière Française*, LVIII, 4 (2006), pp. 389-398.

¹⁷⁴ Jean-Michel Minovez, ‘Grandeur et décadence de la navigation fluviale: l’exemple du bassin supérieur de la Garonne du milieu du xviie au milieu du xixe siècle’, *Histoire, Économie & Société*, 18, 3 (1999).

dégradé à tel excès qu'il faut chercher à l'extrémité des forêts pour trouver un hêtre propre à faire quelque ouvrage que ce soit.”¹⁷⁵ The lack of royal control, he claimed, had encouraged mismanagement and *abus* on an enormous scale, which in his eyes amply justified the incisive government-led intervention he had been charged with conducting.

Map 3 Languedoc: Floatable and Navigable rivers



With their combined resources, ligneous, hydrographic or other, the central and eastern Pyrénées might have appeared as a land of plenty to Froidour, but as he and his successors knew all too well, these opportunities were commensurate with the difficulties rooted in the peculiar characteristics of their natural and human environments. Late snows, floods, or dry spells reducing the suitability of rivers for timber transportation could thwart the best laid out tree-harvesting plans. Villagers who had enjoyed vital customary rights for centuries could resist their curtailment by passive resistance or direct acts of violence. Owners of forested estates, resentful of the increasing constraints on their exploitation rights, could use their personal influence and legal means to challenge official decisions. To be successful, a forestry reform had to take into account the sensitivities and vested

¹⁷⁵ ADHG, B, A2, ‘Procès-verbal d’avis pour le règlement des coupes (Quillan), 8 mai 1670’.

interests of a large number of stakeholders, all competing for the region's diverse but limited forestry resources.

Languedoc's defiant communities

Languedoc's populations presented Languedoc's *maîtrises* with particular challenges, which reflected their specific interests in the forests. The judgments pronounced as a result of the two *Réformations* that covered the district of Quillan, in the 1660s and 1730s, can provide an idea of the nature of these challenges.¹⁷⁶ In 1670, the rural communities furnished with 66 % the majority of all cases, while the rest was divided between landowners, 30 % of them noble, and just 4 % members of the Church. Most of the charges brought by Froidour to the '*consuls et habitants*' of rural communities concerned abuse of customary use-rights or missing entitlements for using the forests (unauthorised charcoal-making, forest-grazing or wood theft). The charges were often accompanied by accusations of deliberate damage (*dégradation*). In six cases, the villagers were accused of illicit clearances in order to turn the land into cultivation or build a *métairie*. By contrast, noble and Church cases were overwhelmingly about missing deeds confirming their ownership of, and rights over, the forests.

For the operation of 1736, *Réformation* judgments were found spread between five registers covering a lengthy period, from 1736 to 1749. They show a similar distribution between the different categories of offenders, with the significant difference that wood merchants appeared as a new group in the judgment listings (8 %). They were accused with overcutting beyond their contract or building sawmills without authorisation.¹⁷⁷ Landowners (noble and non-noble, Church or hospitals) represented 27 % of all cases, and 65 % concerned communities. Contestations with landowners were still about title deeds, shared ownership with the king (*paréage*), as well as non-compliance with the obligation to demarcate their property (*bornage*). The charges levelled at the communities were described in detail in the judgment texts. Next to the numerous cases of 'wood theft', they referred to building on unauthorised clearances and forest grazing in unallowed zones or seasons (whereby confiscated animals were sometimes forcefully recovered by their

¹⁷⁶ For the first *Réformation*: ADAD, 63C73, 1 and 63C73, 2, f.263-440, 'Jugements en Réformation, Quillan, Pays de Sault (1670)'. Only the Sault region has been considered here, and I have excluded cases of officers, which will be treated separately in chapter four. For the second *Réformation*: ADAD, 63C63-4, 63C75-7, 'Quillan: Réformation; Jugements et procédures (1736-1749)'.
¹⁷⁷ Fraud among wood merchants will be treated in detail in chapter four.

owners). Several mentions of “*rébellions*” indicate either passive resistance (not showing up at summons), or acts of verbal or physical violence against members of the *maîtrises*. In 1738, a *garde* was murdered while on patrol. Half a century after Froidour’s intervention in Languedoc, opposition to *maîtrise* rule, especially regarding the curtailment of their customary rights, was unabated.

The authorities were well aware that the main problem for ‘forest crime’ was deficient policing. Costly, heavy-handed involvement of the *maréchaussée* was rarely available, and the forest *gardes* charged with reporting offenses had only limited enforcement capabilities. Private forests were patrolled by seigneurial *gardes* recruited by the owner, but accredited by the *maîtrises*. In the royal forests, control on the ground or collecting forestry fines relied on few, badly remunerated collector-*gardes* recruited from the villages bordering the forests, whose service loyalties often proved to be questionable. The problem was particularly acute in the mountains, where harsh natural and human conditions limited the scope and effectiveness of *maîtrise* interventions. Because of their relevance for our case study, the rural communities of the Pyrénées will be described in some more detail.

The mentality of the Pyrenean communities appeared to have been shaped by violence and conflict. For Christian Bourret and Peter Sahlins,¹⁷⁸ their identity was primarily determined by their border situation at the southern margins of the kingdom, together with its corollary, conflict. Historians influenced by anthropological approaches have described a peculiar mentality of “montagne–frontière” characterised by arcane, honour-bound rules of allegiance and ties of obligations, persistent feuding between local warlords, *bandolerism*,¹⁷⁹ clanism, rogue-baron racket, all aggravated by international conflict.¹⁸⁰ Just one decade after the *paix des Pyrénées*, the collective memory was still scarred by the horrors of the recent wars, and when in 1667 conflict with Spain flared up again, deeply ingrained fears of the *miquelets*¹⁸¹ who still roamed the backcountry quickly resurfaced. The massing of troops, winter-quartering, and intense fortification works in Collioure, Perpignan or Mont-Louis presented poor communities with the additional worry of seeing

¹⁷⁸ Christian Bourret, *Les Pyrénées centrales du IXe au XIXe siècle: la formation progressive d'une frontière* (Soueich, 1995); Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: the making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley, 1989).

¹⁷⁹ *Bandolers* were organised bands of mercenaries recruited by local seigneurs and towns (Bourret, *Les Pyrénées*, 95).

¹⁸⁰ Apart from Bourret or Sahlins, see also Paul Chabrol, ‘De l'influence du relief dans l'étude des questions pastorales pyrénéennes’, *Revue des Forêts Françaises*, 12, (1954), pp. 745-754, 749.

¹⁸¹ *Miquelets* were light mountain units used by the Catalans, a model later copied by the Maréchal de Noailles for the French army.

what little was left of their communal woods ravaged by special requisitions for these military constructions.

Exposed to unforgiving physical conditions, crippling scarcity of resources, and hazardous border conditions, mountain communities developed survival strategies centred on transborder trade with the Catalans, with whom they shared a common language. Since ancient times, deeply cut-in valleys and ‘ports’ had encouraged the two-way transit of people and merchandise. Communities on either side made regular arrangements for the transhumance of flocks, or the trading of horses, metals, and agricultural and animal products. These commercial exchanges, vital for their livelihoods, were protected by ancient border-crossing treaties, the *lies et passeries*, concluded with the blessing of the French and Spanish monarchs. Over time, these transborder activities created a fiercely autonomous spirit, which could easily tip into outright *rébellion*,¹⁸² as Froidour recounted during his voyage of discovery of 1667. “Les gentilshommes et le peuple [...] avoient été fort difficiles à gouverner, [...] ils n’avoient reconnu ny l’autorité de la justice et du Parlement, ny celle des intendants ny celle des gouverneurs de la province, et [...] celle du roy y avoit esté la plus méprisée.”¹⁸³ Half a century later, this belligerent spirit seemed unabated. On their inspection of the distant forests of Campagna (Donnezan region) in October 1728, the officers of Quillan reported that unauthorised clearings and illegal charcoal-making could not be prosecuted there, because “pas un garde ne vouloit aller faire ses fonctions dans ce pays a cause de l’esprit de révolte qui y reigné.”¹⁸⁴ Surveyors, *gardes* or fine-collectors venturing near some of these mountain villages risked being threatened, attacked, or even killed. The land seemed ungovernable.

Dealing with restive rural populations, however, only represented one facet of *maîtrise* business. For the most part, the interlocutors of the royal officers were town-dwelling owners and users of the forests. Whether wood-based artisans, wood traders, or influential landlords, the relationships of this urban cohort with forestry officers were governed by a common participation in municipal governance, further complexified by multiple kinship links and other forms of social bondage. These processes can be best understood from the point of view of the specific political, economic, social and cultural fabric of the towns to which they all belonged.

¹⁸² In contemporary language, the term ‘rébellion’ described any act of passive or active resistance to official measures. This also included not attending a summons.

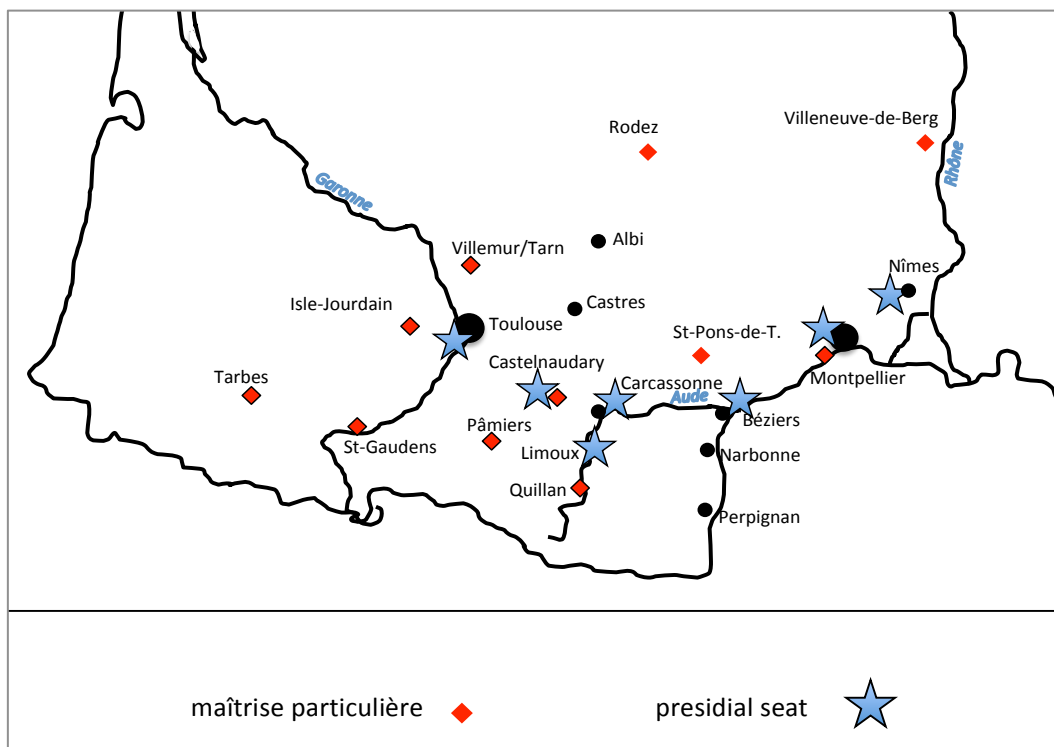
¹⁸³ Castéran, *Les Pyrénées Centrales*, 31.

¹⁸⁴ ADH, C1257, f.142-143v., ‘Procès-verbal de visite, octobre 1728’.

The towns

In the 1700s, the vast majority of Languedoc's population lived in places below 400 m altitude. They were particularly concentrated along the lower Garonne south of Toulouse, on the southern fringes of the Massif Central, and in the coastal plains of Bas-Languedoc between Montpellier and Narbonne. For the purpose of this section, I have selected fourteen *diocèses civils* of the province bearing a special geographical or topical relevance for this study.¹⁸⁵ It returned 188 places, described as *villes* in the *Dénombrement* of Claude Saugrain.¹⁸⁶ Their distribution by population size shows a clear predominance of towns below 2,300 inhabitants (87 %). As elsewhere, Languedoc was characterised by the contrast between a widely dispersed small-town and village population, and few large and densely populated metropolises. Two cities reached the 30,000 mark: Toulouse (37,762 residents), and Montpellier (36,552). Far behind came Nîmes (20,560), Béziers (10,993), Narbonne (9,586), Albi (8,845) and Castres (8,539). (Map 4)

Map 4 Selected towns in Languedoc, with special consideration of *maîtrise* and *présidial* seats (Source: Saugrain, 1709)



¹⁸⁵ Albi, Toulouse, Castres, Carcassonne, Limoux, Aleth, Mirepoix, Rieux, Lavaur, Saint-Papoul, part of Montauban, Part of Comminges, Narbonne and Saint-Pons.

¹⁸⁶ Claude Saugrain, *Dénombrement du royaume par généralités, élections, paroisses et feux...* (Paris, 1709). Généralités Toulouse et Montpellier: vol.2, 225-303.

Unsurprisingly, Table 1 shows that Languedoc's seven most populous towns were also equipped with a wide range of institutions, and, apart from Castres, they all belonged to the wealthiest *diocèses* with the highest *taille* allocation (Fig. 2).¹⁸⁷ Among the welter of institutions hosted by the *généralité's* two capital cities, Toulouse and Montpellier, the *Parlement* and the *Cour des Comptes et Aides* embodied the judicial and financial orientation of these cities. They defined their identity and determined the specific socio-professional structure of their populations. With its *Table de Marbre* and its university (where most *maîtrise* officers received their legal education), Toulouse is particularly relevant for our study. Since the establishment of the *Parlement* in 1420, and "by virtue of its vast jurisdiction, its continuity of tradition, and the aggregate social prestige of its members,"¹⁸⁸ this institution developed into an imposing legal apparatus. Under the presidency of Gaspard de Fieubet in 1673, it occupied over one hundred magistrates and other officers, with office values at the high end of the regional scale.¹⁸⁹ Together they formed a robe notability that set the tone in the leading circles of the city. The Toulouse *Parlement* was an imposing regional centre of political control, well capable of undermining the authority of the *Eaux-et-Forêts*.

Outside these prominent cities, much of Languedoc's population lived in towns of more modest proportions. From their diverse perspectives, historians of early modern towns concurred that a '*ville*' must be studied from the point of view of contemporary standards. For his definition of a *ville*, Saugrain probably used a traditional definition based on ancient privileges and external characteristics such as a market or a defensive wall.¹⁹⁰ While the accuracy of Saugrain's listings has been questioned by George Frêche (mainly because he amalgamated *paroisses* and *communautés*), a comparison based on a small sample showed only minor differences between Saugrain's data and Frêche's revised figures.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Basville, *Mémoires*, 166.

¹⁸⁸ Beik, *Absolutism*, 77.

¹⁸⁹ The office of first president of the Toulouse *Parlement* for example had a market value in the region of 150,000 livres (Beik, *Absolutism*, 52).

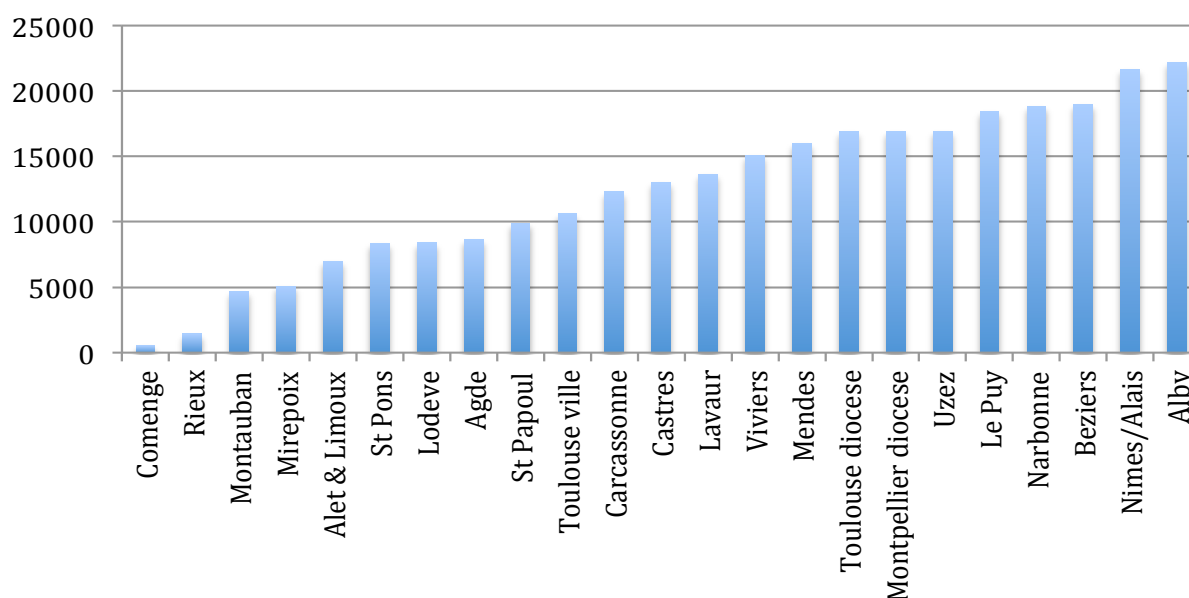
¹⁹⁰ Saugrain, *Dénombrement du royaume*.

¹⁹¹ Georges Frêche, 'Dénombrement de feux et d'habitants de 2 973 communautés de la région toulousaine (1536-1790)', *Annales de démographie historique*, 1 (1968), pp. 389-421, and 2 (1969), pp. 393-471.

Table 1 Major institutions in Languedoc's seven largest cities
(Source: Saugrain, 1709)

TOWN	MAIN INSTITUTIONS	POPULATION (inh.)
TOULOUSE	Admiralty; Archbishopric; <i>Foraine</i> ; <i>Bourse</i> ; <i>Bureau des traites</i> ; <i>Capitole</i> ; <i>Grenier sel</i> ; <i>Hôtel du commerce</i> ; Royal Judge; <i>Maréchaussée</i> ; <i>Parlement</i> ; <i>Présidial</i> ; <i>Sénéchaussée</i> ; <i>Table de Marbre</i> ; University; <i>Viguerie</i>	37,762
MONTPELLIER	<i>Cour comptes et aides</i> ; <i>Bureau équivalent</i> ; Bishopric; <i>Foraine</i> ; <i>Grenier sel</i> ; <i>Hôtel monnaies</i> ; Royal Judges; <i>Maîtrise Particulière</i> ; <i>Maréchaussée</i> ; <i>Petit Scel</i> ; <i>Présidial</i> ; <i>Sénéchaussée</i> ; University; <i>Visiteur Gabelles</i>	36,552
NIMES	<i>Convention de Nîmes</i> ; Bishopric; <i>Grenier sel</i> ; Royal judge; <i>Maréchaussée</i> ; <i>Présidial</i> ; <i>Sénéchaussée</i>	20,560
BEZIERS	Bishopric; <i>Grenier sel</i> ; <i>Maréchaussée</i> ; <i>Présidial</i> ; <i>Sénéchal Carcassonne</i> ; <i>Vicomté</i> ; <i>Viguerie Royale (non resident)</i>	10,993
NARBONNE	Admiralty; Archbishopric; <i>Capitole</i> ; <i>Foraine</i> ; <i>Grenier sel</i> ; <i>Maréchaussée</i>	9,586
ALBI	Archbishopric; <i>Grenier sel</i> ; Judge; <i>Maréchaussée</i> ; <i>Viguerie</i>	8,845
CASTRES	Comté; Bishopric; <i>Grenier sel</i> ; Royal Judge; <i>Maréchaussée</i> , <i>Sénéchaussée</i>	8,539

Fig.2 Languedoc's diocèses ranked by their taille allocation (livres)
(Source: Basville, *Mémoires*)



As historians like William Beik or Jean-Pierre Poussou have convincingly demonstrated, population size was not the only defining feature of the early modern town, and often not even the most important one.¹⁹² In the eyes of contemporaries, the ranking of a town also depended on the density and quality of their institutional infrastructure, and/or their economic buoyancy. In *pays d'Etats*, a particular factor of prestige was also the town's role in the yearly *Etats* assemblies. In Languedoc, towns situated in *diocèses* at the poorer end of the *taille* spread combined smaller populations and limited institutional infrastructures. These discrepancies are clearly visible in our sample of 188 towns, where only 26 % of them had more than one institution. In most cases this included a non-resident *juge royal*, perched on the lower rungs of the legal hierarchy (Table 2). Crucially, to this group of towns also belonged Colbert's new permanent *maîtrise* seats. In eight out of ten cases, Froidour chose, or confirmed, their location in small Languedocian market towns, with populations well below 5,000 inhabitants. The *maîtrise* of Montpellier, located in Languedoc's eastern metropole, was an exception. As the area it controlled had very few royal forests, it became dedicated instead to overseeing the coastal fisheries and sea salt resources.

These observations however offer only a partial picture of the urban reality of the province. True to the period, the focus of Saugrain as an official demographer was on institutions connected with the royal administration. By considering the province from the perspective of the people who lived and worked in it, a different picture emerges, dominated by the towns' role in the *Etats*.¹⁹³ As René Souriac concluded in his study of sixteenth-century towns in the Ariège valley, "le premier critère de définition de la ville aux yeux des contemporains c'était son appartenance à l'assemblée des Etats."¹⁹⁴ Next to the *Etats* of Languedoc, the region also hosted a number of small but combative assemblies, representing the interests of the Pyrenean communities. The *Etats* of Nébouzan, Bigorre, Quatre-Vallées and Foix, which survived Louis XIII's intervention of 1629, kept their vitality as effective mouthpieces of popular grievances. Through the *Etats*, Languedoc's smaller towns were connected to higher levels of decision-making, especially regarding the

¹⁹² Beik, *Absolutism*, especially pp. 59-76; Poussou, *Les Petites Villes*; Meyer et Poussou, *Etudes sur les villes françaises*.

¹⁹³ For a comprehensive overview of the *Etats* of Languedoc, see S. Durand e.al., *Des Etats dans l'Etat*.

¹⁹⁴ René Souriac, 'Les villes du Comminges au XVIe siècle', in: Poussou, *Les petites villes du Moyen-Age*, pp. 65-77, 66.

all-important distribution of the *taille* between the different *diocèses*. The role played by smaller towns in *Etats* assemblies also contributed to their self-perception. Town delegates were members of the small but powerful urban notability of legal professionals, successful merchants and, in the towns hosting *maîtrises particulières*, forestry officers. For these provincial “notables de deuxième rang,” this role conferred them a measure of symbolic prestige as they – however modestly - partook in a negotiation process with the crown. Conversely, their role at the *Etats* contributed to their local respectability, thus consolidating further their local anchorage. For Jean-François Dubost, this small urban oligarchy enjoyed “la réaffirmation par la monarchie des principes d’autorité et de hiérarchie, principes qu’eux-mêmes incarnent et aident à imposer à l’ensemble de la population.”¹⁹⁵

Table 2 Towns housing the eleven maîtrises particulières of the Grande Maîtrise of Toulouse, by institutions, population (inh.), and royal forests (ha)
(Sources: Saugrain, 1709, and Frêche, *Dénombrement*)

TOWN	POPULATION	INSTITUTIONS	ROYAL FORESTS
TARBES	Unknown	Bishopric; Maîtrise Particulière	202
VILLENEUVE DE BERG	2179	Bailliage; Juge Royal n.r.; Maîtrise Particulière	394
RODEZ	6000	Bishopric; Présidial; Sénéchaussée; Juge Royal n.r.; Maréchaussée; Maîtrise Particulière	2117
CASTELNAUDARY	4637	Grenier à Sel; Présidial; Juge Royal n.r.; Sénéchaussée; Maîtrise Particulière	3012
MONTPELLIER	36552	Cour Comptes; Bishopric; Hôtel des Monnaies; Foraine; Présidial; Sénéchaussée; Grenier à Sel; Petit Scel; Université; Visiteur des Gabelles; Maîtrise Particulière	4594
ISLE-JOURDAIN	1708	Juge Royal n.r.; Maîtrise Particulière	6488
ST PONS DE THOMIERES	3376	Bishopric; Grenier à Sel; Maîtrise Particulière	8347
VILLEMUR (TOULOUSE)	3673	Juge Royal n.r.; Maîtrise Particulière	10373
PAMIERS	4400	Bishopric; Maîtrise Particulière	26976
QUILLAN	1672	(‘Admiralty’) ?; Maîtrise Particulière	28137
ST GAUDENS	1809	Bishopric; Maîtrise Particulière	47004

¹⁹⁵ Dubost, *Absolutisme*, 386.

Local power structures of meridional towns, well anchored in the collective psyche, had overseen the administration and well being of their residents for centuries. For the families who had been associated with them for generations, this local bond was a crucial factor shaping their self-perception and identity. For royal officers, a role in municipal governance provided opportunities for prestige, recognition and political influence that could parallel, and compete with, those offered by the crown.

Small-town governance

A long tradition of municipal governance, based on a *corps de ville* endowed with specific structures and responsibilities, was the hallmark of the early modern meridional town.¹⁹⁶ A system of elective *consuls* and a coopted *conseil* led to the emergence of a small local ‘*bourgeoisie*’ whose members were perceived as the natural leaders of the urban community. Family members were sometimes involved, as in Quillan, where the daughter of *garde-marteau* Etienne Loubet acted regularly as godmother to the town’s foundlings. Four red-robed dignitaries, the *premier consul* and three auxiliaries, presided over municipal affairs, assisted by a *conseil* of notables comprised of notaries, merchants, medical men, and ‘bourgeois’.¹⁹⁷ Further members of the *corps de ville* included notaries, treasurers, petty magistrates of seigneurial courts,¹⁹⁸ as well as *marguilliers* who, as churchwardens, also oversaw charitable activities. In municipal assemblies, decisions were taken by a simple majority of votes. Among a wide range of responsibilities, the most important ones consisted in organising tax collections, supervising the town’s finances and managing public works. The *premier consul* participated in *Etats* assemblies in an honorific capacity.

For all the prestige and authority these public functions conferred, they also carried a highly ambivalent status and certain personal risks. A task considered most abhorrent was that of collecting community debts or royal dues, as it could easily lead to resentment and hostility. In 1719, Quillan’s *consuls* decided to take on the task of collecting the royal tax, “car ils estimaient la chose odieuse et susceptible d’entraîner la ruine de plusieurs

¹⁹⁶ Maurice Bordes, *L’administration provinciale et municipale en France au 18e siècle* (Paris, 1972), especially pp. 185-187.

¹⁹⁷ These categories will be analysed further in chapter three. ‘Bourgeois’ is taken here in its meaning as individuals living from their rents.

¹⁹⁸ A contribution to the debate on the continuing strength of non-royal jurisdictions in: François Brizay, Antoine Follain et Véronique Sarrazin (dirs.), *Les justices de village. Administration et justice locales de la fin du Moyen Âge à la Révolution* (Rennes, 2002).

familles.”¹⁹⁹ *Consuls* who were routinely coopted to ensure that forestry regulations were being implemented, were liable to being prosecuted and fined ‘in their own, private name’ if they failed.

Notwithstanding the legacy of municipal governance that endowed these towns with a strong sense of traditional privilege and autonomy, the influence of the crown could be felt at several levels. The archbishop of Narbonne, at once overlord of Quillan, *président-né* of the *Etats*, and closely associated with the king’s inner circle, embodied in his person the alliance between the town, the province, and the crown. From the fourteenth century, monarchical governments were repeatedly called upon as arbiters in local revolts, which eventually led them to introduce reforms of administrative procedures or a revision of the representation system.²⁰⁰ After 1687, in the elections for the *capitouls* of Toulouse, the choice of eight names out of the list of twenty-four candidates was entirely left to the *intendant*. Steps like these reflected the increase of royal influence in municipal governance.

In this closely interconnected town-crown system, the year 1693 was a further milestone, when the king, “spéculant sur la vanité bourgeoise,”²⁰¹ created offices of *maires perpétuels* and *lieutenants de maire* in every town, endowed with attractive privileges.²⁰² This measure encroached seriously on entrenched traditions of elective municipal administration. The new venal *maires* were exempt from increases of *taille* and *gabelle*, from forced loans, and from bothersome services to the military. *Gages* were at 5% of their ‘finance’. In some towns, these offices could even lead to nobility. This first move was followed in 1723 by the creation of the offices of *conseiller maire ancien et alternatif mi-triennal*, and of *conseiller maire ancien mi-triennal*. After being rescinded in 1724, mayorships were reintroduced in many places by the edict of November 1733, again with attractive privileges. Together with ownership of legal offices like those of *présidiaux* or *maîtrises*, mayoral offices represented yet another layer of royal intrusion in local affairs. More generally, the juxtaposition of royal and non-royal sources of empowerment is an important theme in this study. The following analysis of the power arena in the small town

¹⁹⁹ Marcel, *Quillan*, 173.

²⁰⁰ Beik, *Absolutism*, 66.

²⁰¹ Pierre Goubert, *Familles marchandes sous l'Ancien Régime : les Danse et les Motte de Beauvais* (Paris, 1959), 130.

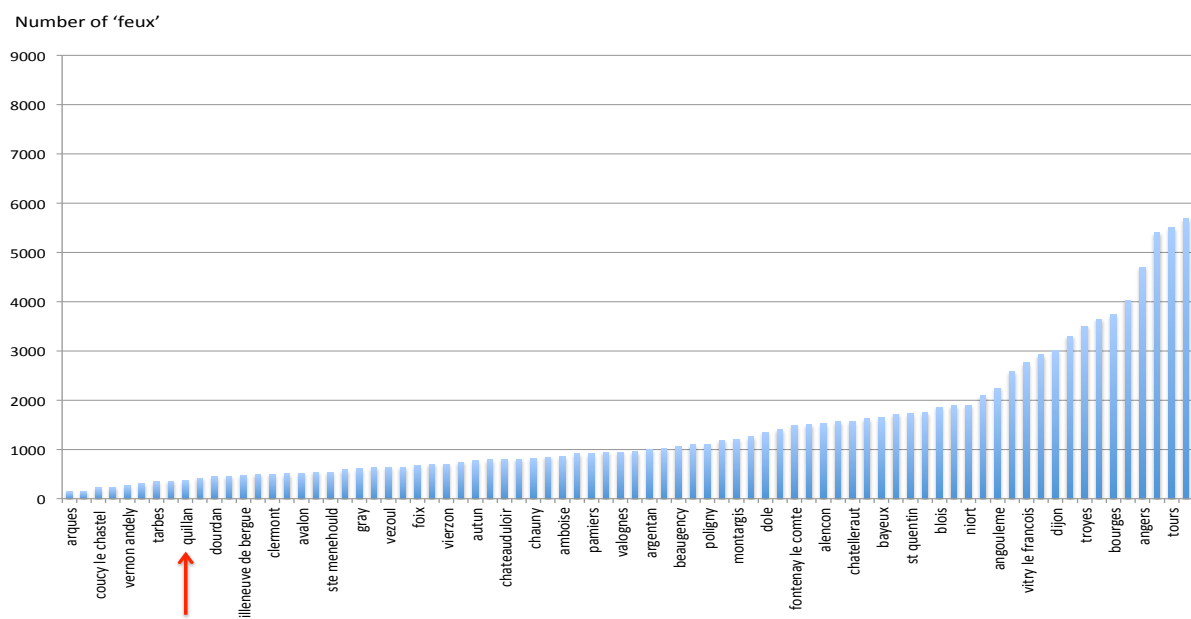
²⁰² Edicts of March 1693 and *lettres patentes* of June 1694. See for example Maurice Bordes, ‘Le rachat des offices municipaux en Languedoc au XVIIIe siècle’, *Annales du Midi*, 80, 88 (1968), pp. 283-303.

of Quillan provides an excellent example of the ways in which they overlapped, interacted, or clashed, whereby the outcome cannot be determined in simple win-lose terms.

The example of Quillan

The small town and river port of Quillan on the Aude (291 m average elevation)²⁰³ is located in a natural cul-de-sac at the juncture between the fertile plains south of Carcassonne and Limoux, and the first elevations above 1,000 m of the Sault plateau. In Saugrain's estimation, it had 366 *feux* in 1709, representing approximately 1,700 inhabitants. In a sample of eighty-one *maîtrises* in the whole of France for which population information could be found (excluding the *maîtrises* near Paris), over half, including Quillan, were established in towns of less than 1,000 "feux", representing approximately 4,500 inhabitants. (Fig. 3)²⁰⁴

*Fig.3 France: Distribution of eighty-one maîtrises particulières
by population (feux)
(Source: Saugrain, 1709)*



²⁰³ The town is said to have derived its name from three cone-shaped mounts (*quilles*) to the south.

²⁰⁴ For the conversion between *feux* and inhabitants, I used the ratio of 4.569/feu suggested by Basville (*Mémoires*, 39). This is very close to the indices suggested by George Frêche.

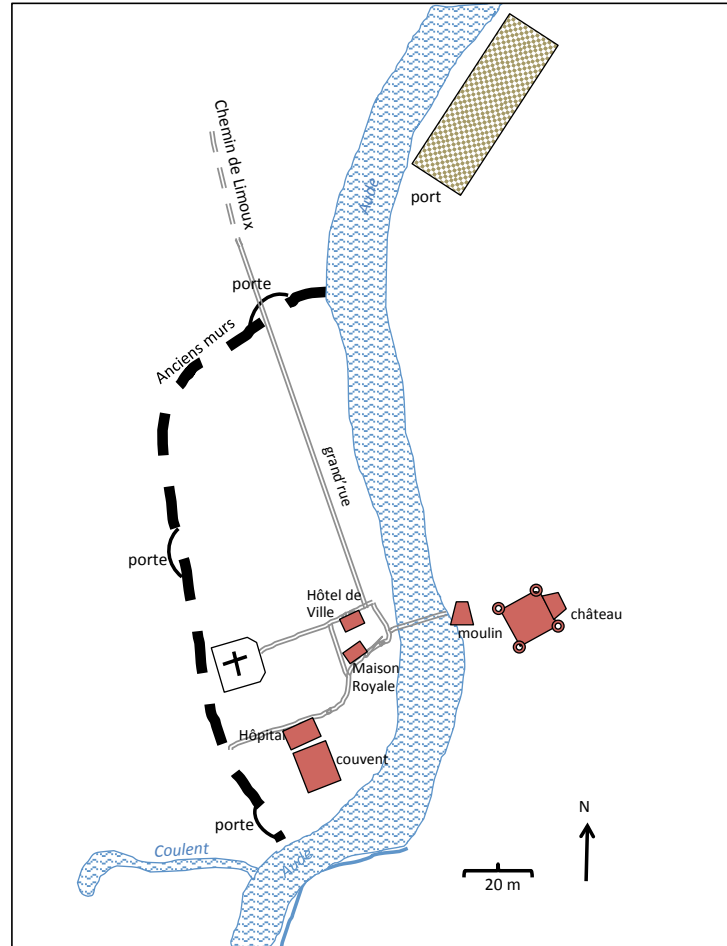
In terms of governance, Quillan was the principal town of the *diocèse* of Alet, one of Languedoc's twenty-four *diocèses*, which became separated from that of Limoux in 1660. For ordinary jurisdiction, Quillan belonged to the *sénéchaussée* and *présidial* of Limoux, but as a *baronnie*, it was under direct the seigneurial rule of the archbishopric of Narbonne, which comprised all three justice levels. As Languedoc's oldest and richest ecclesiastical *diocèse*, its holder was the *président-né* of the Languedoc *Etats*. He topped Beik's list of 'truly influential powers' in the province.²⁰⁵ In Quillan, where he perceived municipal rights as the town's overlord, the archbishop owned the castle, a flourmill on the Aude, and a number of forests in the Sault region, well stocked with high-forests in the precious fir-beech zone. Entering his service as *châtelain*, *lieutenant* or *procureur* to represent his financial and legal interests endowed the bearer of the post with prestige and protection.

With its municipal governance structure shared between the *seigneur* (here the archbishop of Narbonne) and the elected *consuls*, Quillan was typical of many meridional towns. The moral and religious well being of the residents on a day-to-day basis was in the hands of the parish priest, overseen by the bishop of Alet who visited the town episodically. The town's four *consuls* were elected annually from a list provided by the archbishop - who also received their oath in person. In 1694, Jean-Pierre Pinet, a scion of a successful local family of wood merchants boasting several *consuls*, bought the new royal office of *maire*, which remained within the wider family remit of the Pinets until the Revolution. As *ville de tour*, Quillan's first *consul* (or *maire*) was invited to the *Etats* sessions every third year, but he participated on an annual basis in the deliberations of the *assiette diocésaine* for the allocation of the royal tax.

The main features of the town as it might have appeared around 1700 could be reconstructed (Map 5). By the 1730s, the old town walls on the left bank of the river had been largely dismantled. On a promontory on its right bank stood the remains of the archbishop's castle. Inside the town, Quillan's most prominent features included the church, the town hall (destroyed by fire in 1715), a monastery, a hospital, and the rafting port. The houses of the most prominent families lined the *grand-rue*. Some of them – including that of *garde-marteau* Etienne Loubet – had a public oven in their precincts to be used by other residents. Quillan was also home to a small number of nobles who left their mountain *seigneuries* to spend the cold winter months in the milder climes of the town.

²⁰⁵ Beik, *Absolutism*, 44.

Map 5 The town of Quillan around 1700
(Map base: Cadastre of 1826)



In the early 1670s, the *Maison Royale*, seat of the new *maîtrise*, was being conspicuously built on the central square, within close range of both the church and the town hall. Its appellation as *Maison Royale* sent a clear message. It drove home the concept of a source of authority distinct from that of municipal structures. As an “ouvrage public qui doi[t] demeurer jusques à la fin des siècles”, the royal building had to follow the highest architectural standards.²⁰⁶ It was a multi-purpose building. The council chamber housed the registers and the special casket containing the royal tagging hammer, the court room was used for the weekly hearings, while offenders were locked inside the prison cell on the ground floor. Until 1744, it also served as private residence for the *maître particulier* and his family, and hosted the *grand-maître* and other officials on their visits to the town. Each autumn, auctions for the sale of wood from the royal forests were held in its main chamber.

²⁰⁶ ADAD, 63C5, f.33, ‘Procès-verbal sur financement de la Maison Royale, 3 janvier 1678’.

These public, colourful events attracted many bidders from outside town, including Carcassonne, within a radius of fifty kilometres.²⁰⁷

Like many other meridional towns, Quillan perfectly illustrates the remarks of Filippo de Vivo concluding his analysis of communication processes in early modern Venice. What made social status, personal ties and individual authority politically significant, he stated, was “the potential for social mixing” facilitated by *lieux*, but also *moments, de sociabilité*.²⁰⁸ The preceding description of the town’s main features underscores the key role of these places for social exchange, where events were discussed, business settled, and rumours passed on. Forestry material is replete with statements such as “il fut murmuré publiquement dans cette ville que ...,”²⁰⁹ or “[I]ls virent la dame de rouzaud qui estoit sur le seuil de la porte de la maison royale ou elle habitoit et qui dit a haute voix en les regardant...,”²¹⁰ or again “... et led. sr rouzaud passant devant la porte dud.laprade pour aller au port, il les pria de vouloir entrer dans son bureau...”²¹¹ Physically and conceptually, royal officers were at the heart of the “rumeur publique” and social control, which were driving urban politics in these small forestry seats. One of the aims of this study is to determine how far they also influenced their professional behaviour and service loyalties.

Quillan, a stable socio-professional structure

The economic structure of Quillan reproduced that of the whole province. It was mainly based on the production of wool cloth, leather works, and agricultural products, which increasingly included winemaking from local vineyards. As a river port well equipped with raft-making facilities, Quillan also developed a thriving wood-based artisanry and commercial activity. Based on our survey of parish records of 1666 and on the *compoix* listings of 1731 recorded by André Marcel,²¹² we can get a picture of the socio-professional structure of the town, but no claim can be made for the figures obtained from these sources to represent the whole working population. For our purpose, the forty-six professional categories or social groups identified in the sources have been re-grouped into eleven main categories. (Table 3)

²⁰⁷ ADAD, 63C32, ‘Ventes de bois, Quillan, (1679)’.

²⁰⁸ de Vivo, *Information and communication*.

²⁰⁹ ADH, C1257, f.175, ‘Audition Jean Roillet, 5 aout 1737’.

²¹⁰ ADH, C1255, pièce 321, f.3r., ‘Audition personnelle André Boire, 26 octobre 1737’.

²¹¹ ADH, C1257, pièce 210, page 4, ‘Interrogatoire Jean-Antoine Loubet, 18 septembre 1741’.

²¹² Marcel, *Quillan*, 164, 171 and 175.

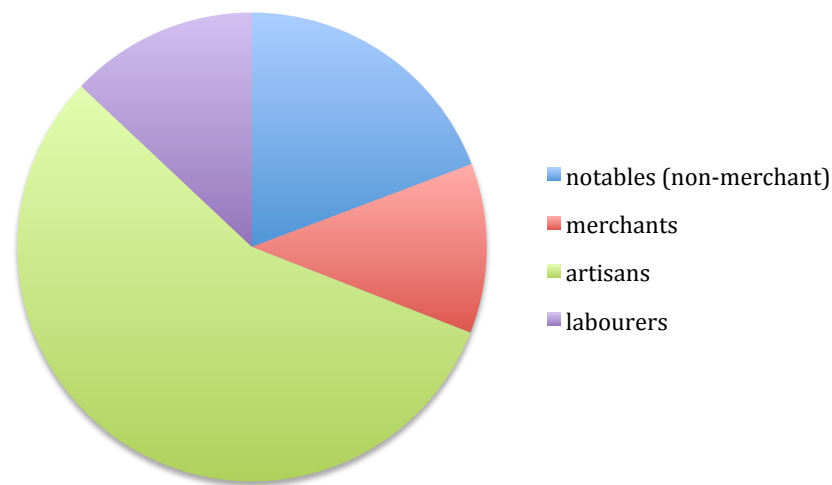
Table 3 *Quillan: Socio-Professional Categories in 1666 and 1731*
(Sources: Parish Registers; André Marcel, Quillan)

CATEGORY	1666	1731
Legal (non-royal)	3	5
Bourgeois	3	6
Merchants (outside wood merchant)	9	6
Medical	6	8
Service, hospitality	1	8
Royal administration	6	9
Wood merchants	4	9
Artisans (wood-based)	15	14
Labourers	14	17
Artisans (other)	14	21
Artisans (textile and leather)	27	43

One can observe that by 1731 the number of textile artisans soared, reflecting what was happening in the rest of the province. The hospitality sector flourished, and the number of wood traders doubled. The other categories showed little change. To further clarify the picture, the professional groups referred to in Quillan's *compoix* have been amalgamated into just four over-arching categories: notables (non-merchant), merchants (wood and non-wood), artisans, and labourers. (Fig. 4) ²¹³

²¹³ They are the same categories as those used by Abbé Jean-Joseph Expilly in his *Dictionnaire géographique, historique et politique des Gaules et de la France*, 6 vols (Avignon, Amsterdam, 1758-1768), Article 'Languedoc', vol. 4, 58.

Fig.4 Quillan: Socio-professional structure, simplified categorisation (%)
(Sources: Paris Registers; André Marcel, Quillan)



Numerically, the town was clearly dominated by artisans (67 %) who supplied local markets. Only 15.5 % were labourers (*brassiers*), many of them working in the surrounding vineyards and in local winemaking. The urban oligarchy comprised non-merchant notables with a legal or medical education (23 %), and the *maîtrise* officers and their families as representatives of the only royal institution of the town. While merchants (14 %) were in smaller numbers, some of them, and especially those who can be qualified as forestry entrepreneurs, must be included in the elite category, not only by virtue of their economic strength and local influence, but also by their pivotal role as intermediaries for the exploitation of the kingdom's forests, royal and other. Wood as a commodity was a crucial factor that shaped the relationship of merchants and royal officers, two forestry professionals who, residing alongside each other in the cramped confines of the town, were also duty-bound to interact and collaborate.

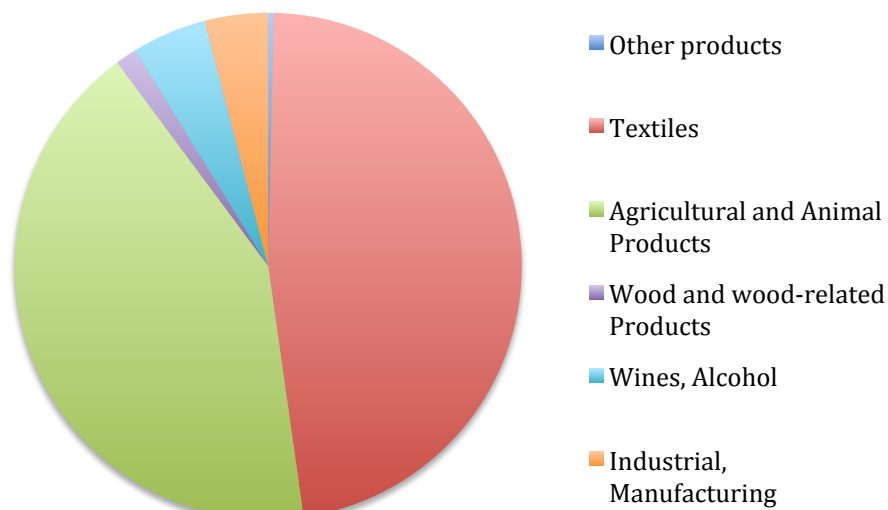
Wood as a commodity

One of the principal characteristics of wood commerce in the early modern period is its regional scope. This also delimited the markets available to Quillan's wood merchants. By its very nature, trading bulk material such as wood was limited to the regional or local spheres because of the price of transportation, unless long-distance fluvial routes, such as the Yonne or the Garonne, could be used. In the case of naval wood, river and/or maritime

transport routes were essential. For this type of wood, Bamford estimated that “the cost of overland transport alone could easily exceed the value of the standing trees.”²¹⁴

In Languedoc, the contribution of wood trade to the province’s overall commercial activity can be evaluated thanks to the detailed listings of goods produced in the province compiled by intendant Basville at the end of the seventeenth century.²¹⁵ In that province, textile products (wool, cotton and silk) clearly dominated, with 47.3 % of the total commercial volume, followed by agricultural and animal-based products, with 42 %. His estimate of 360,000 livres/year for wood trade and wood-related products represented just 1.3 % of the province’s total commercial volume. (Fig. 5)

*Fig.5 Languedoc commerce: distribution
according to main production areas (livres/year)
(Source: Basville, Mémoires)*



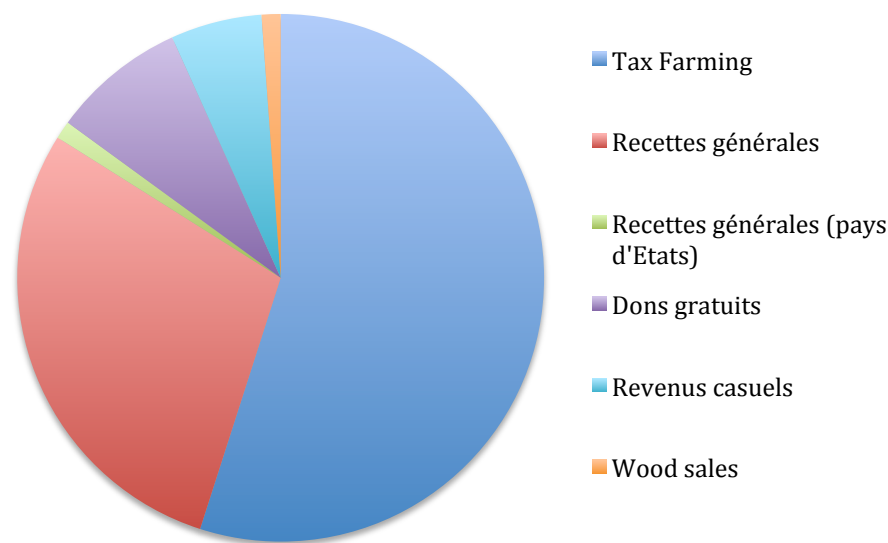
In other provinces, the volume of wood trade naturally varied, depending on the abundance and nature of the forests, transport infrastructures, the presence of larger towns, or specific economic and manufacturing demands. In general, it can be surmised that wood would have similarly represented a more modest contribution than essential goods such as grain or wine.

²¹⁴ Bamford, *Forests and French sea power*, 50.

²¹⁵ Basville, *Mémoires*, 300.

At national scale, returns from royal forests alone were similarly modest, compared with other forms of revenue. In the compendium of the kingdom's various sources of revenue published by Arthur de Boislisle for the years 1683 to 1697,²¹⁶ wood from crown forests represented only a small fraction, especially in relation to particularly weighty income sources, such as tax farming (*fermes*) or '*recettes générales*'. (Fig. 6)²¹⁷

Fig.6 Main sources of national revenue net of expenses (1683)
(Source: Boislisle, *Correspondance*)



In purely economic terms, wood was therefore not a major commercial object that would have captured much governmental attention. Its relevance was of a different nature. It was political. The exploitation, sale and distribution of wood, and the mechanisms that regulated and controlled the access to the forests, formed distinctive regional forestry systems, whose internal dynamics were driven by stake-holders - including the state - motivated by divergent and rival interests. Central to those systems was the personal and professional interaction between *maîtrise* officers charged with implementing long-term royal designs, and wood merchants and land owners motivated by short-term profit. While

²¹⁶ Arthur de Boislisle, ed., *Correspondance des contrôleurs généraux des finances avec les intendants des provinces* (Paris, 1874-1883), vol.1, 583.

²¹⁷ For the period from 1698 to 1703, *grand-maître* Telles d'Acosta estimated the annual revenue from royal forests at 2,200,000 livres. It rose incrementally throughout the century, reaching a figure approaching 8,000,000 livres by 1790. (Quoted in Devèze, *Les forêts françaises*, 258).

the merchants were empowered by trading with all categories of forest owners (including the crown), the authority of the officers and the success of their interventions in non-royal forests could be seriously limited. Dealing with private, clerical, and even with communal forests, demanded diplomacy, negotiation and compromise. In terms of forestry, the legal status of forest ownership was the lynchpin of the relationships between the king and his subjects.

Forest ownership, a political factor

Definitions

For a private owner, a member of the Church, or a village community, a forest was more than a source of income or a reserve for urgent needs. It could turn into a powerful bargaining chip in negotiations and litigation, influence broad policy orientations, and limit the degree of control that *maîtrises* could apply on non-royal forests. Forest ownership by the Church, communities or private subjects had from the outset been an integral factor of forestry policy, but Colbert's special concern with domestic naval supplies gave it a sharper political edge. On their own, the forests of the royal demesne were vastly insufficient to cover the surge of demand for these special, relatively uncommon wood types. This placed non-royal owners, collectively, in a position of leverage.

Before engaging further with issues of forest ownership, it will be helpful to define the concepts of 'forest', and 'ownership'. Today, a 'forest' can be defined from different viewpoints, environmental, legal, institutional, or cultural, but in the eyes of seventeenth-century owners, users or officials, a forest was first and foremost a legal entity, defined by regulations and rules enshrined in title deeds and contracts in written form or orally transmitted.

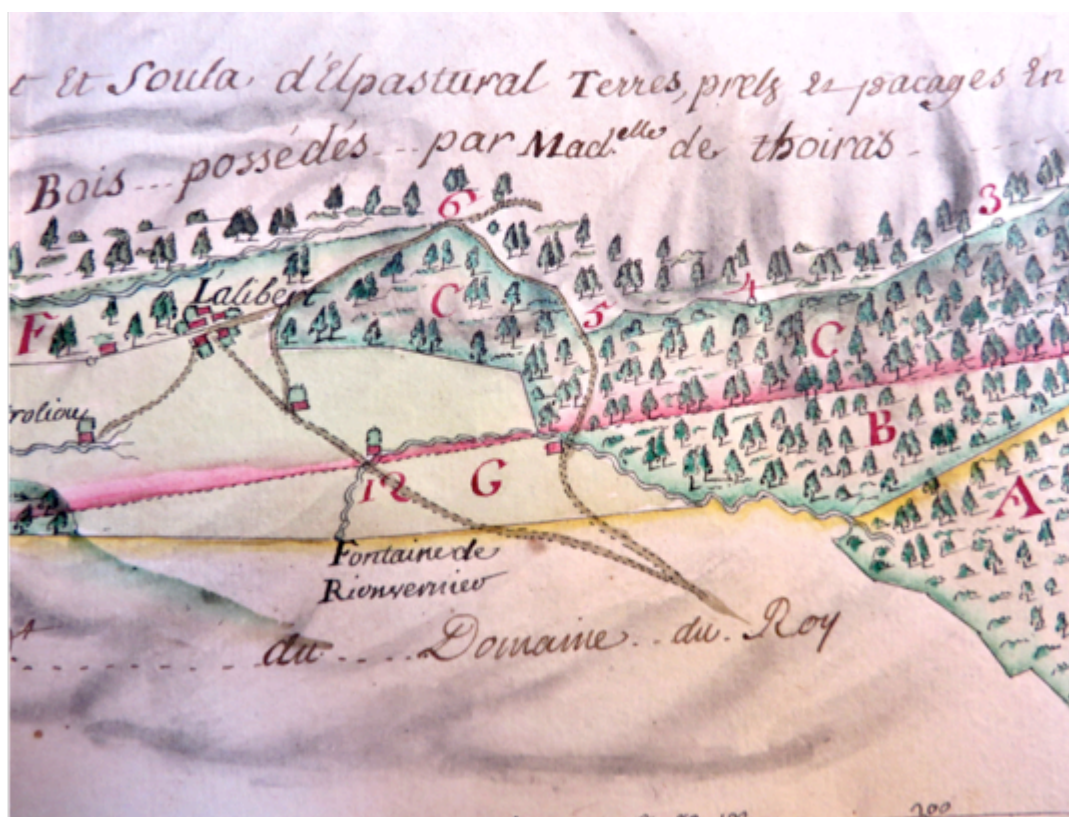
The ceaseless string of *paréage* cases or boundary disputes between adjoining royal forests owned by the crown and a private family bears testimony to the acute awareness and importance of this legal definition. The level of detail shown in the hand-drawn maps reproduced in Figs. 7 and 8 demonstrates the importance attributed to achieving as precise a representation as possible, especially for cases involving the king's demesne. Boundaries had to be determined exactly to serve for any future legal contestation. As a result, one of the most important tasks of *maîtrise* officers and surveyors was the operation of *bornage*,

whereby carefully placed ditches, fences or marking stones determined forest boundaries in a permanent, legally-binding way.

Fig.7 Map illustrating a boundary dispute between the king and Mr. d'Ayat
(Source: AN, Q1, 69, 70)



Fig.8 Detail of a map used in a boundary dispute
between the king and Melle de Thoiras
(Source: AN, Q1, 69, 70)



The notion of ‘ownership’ of a forest also differed vastly from today’s understanding of freehold ownership of land. While private owners could in principle enjoy the proceeds from the sale of wood or the lease of certain rights, their exploitation rights and management plans were constrained by a set of obligations and *servitudes*. In the first place, owners were restricted by measures imposed by the crown, such as the *quart-de-réserve*, the *baliveaux* rule, or the compulsory declaration of naval-grade trees on their land.²¹⁸ Villagers too could have a stake. Under tightly specified conditions they could collect certain types of wood for domestic fuel, and for a small annual *albergue* send pigs to mast in the forests (*glandée*), fish in streams and ponds, or let cattle graze on the soft forest undergrowth. One major part of *Réformation* work consisted in checking entitlement acts to confirm, reduce or abrogate customary rights of villagers in the royal forests. In 1675, it was thus confirmed that the “sindic consuls et habitants du lieu de Belcaire

²¹⁸ See glossary.

jouiront des droits de chauffage de bois mort et sec en estant et gisant et pasturage de leurs bestiaux [...] en payant lesd. redevances ordinaires.”²¹⁹ Shifts and changes in customary laws and property rights, and their very complexity, created a ceaseless string of forestry cases, which also explains the continuing import of forestry courts that specialised in them.

Four categories of forest owners

Fundamentally, forestry law distinguished between four categories of forest owners, royal, clerical, communal and private. One of the most significant results of Colbert’s *Réformations* was a drastic increase of knowledge about them. Concerning royal forests, the surveys performed in each province by the commissioners produced a first reliable, national record of all crown forests in the kingdom, a summary of which, remarkably, survived at the British Library.²²⁰ This manuscript is undated, but Devèze estimated its date at 1680.²²¹ By contrast, the lack of reliable data for non-royal forests, especially before the 1780s, does not facilitate comparative analyses. Communal forests were extremely fragmented throughout the region, and the clergy used arguments like the *don gratuit* to eschew requests for information. It was not before the nationalisation of the Church demesne in 1790 that this information could be ascertained.

Based on Devèze’s study, the comparison between the four main categories of forest owners by 1789 reveals a striking distribution: 58,16 % of France’s forests were in private hands, and only 14.28 % belonged to the Church, unevenly spread between abbeys, regular orders and *mainmorte* communities.²²² Communal forests (16.17 %) were widely dispersed throughout the country’s approximately forty thousand towns and *communautés d’habitants*. Finally, with only 11.38 %, the crown represented the smallest share in terms of forest ownership. (Fig. 9)

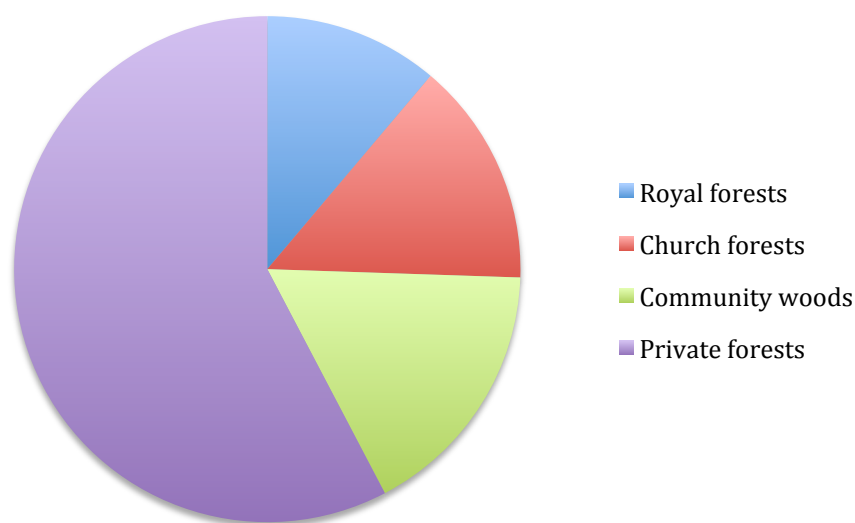
²¹⁹ ADAD, 63C3, f.86r., ‘Etat des chauffages et autres droits... (1675)’.

²²⁰ British Library, ms 7179, ‘Harleyen register’.

²²¹ Devèze, *La grande réformation*, 288.

²²² *Mainmorte* refers here to communities such as congregations or hospitals which did not entail a mutation by death, and whose material possessions were subject to specific jurisdiction.

Fig.9 Distribution of France's forests by owner (1789) (%)
 (Source: Devèze, *Les forêts françaises à la veille de la Révolution*)



Because of the difficulties involved in reconstructing forest acreages and ownership patterns in a more distant past, these percentages can only provide a rough guide for the situation at Colbert's time. It can however be assumed that this strikingly unbalanced distribution within the kingdom was already in place. Devèze provided a useful discussion of these methodological problems.²²³ Data reliability improves at regional and local level. In certain provinces, the predominance of one particular owner category could be extreme. In Périgord, "almost all of the woodlands were in private hands,"²²⁴ while in the northern Cambrésis, strong episcopal presence resulted in 80 % of the forests being in the hands of *mainmorte* communities.²²⁵ What distinguished the Languedoc from other regions was its particularly high proportion of royal forests. Based on measurements recorded in the 'Harleyen' register, with 21.8 % of France's total acreage of royal forests, Languedoc topped the list before Champagne, Isle-de-France, Normandie and Touraine, each holding approximately 15 % royal forests.²²⁶ (Fig. 10)

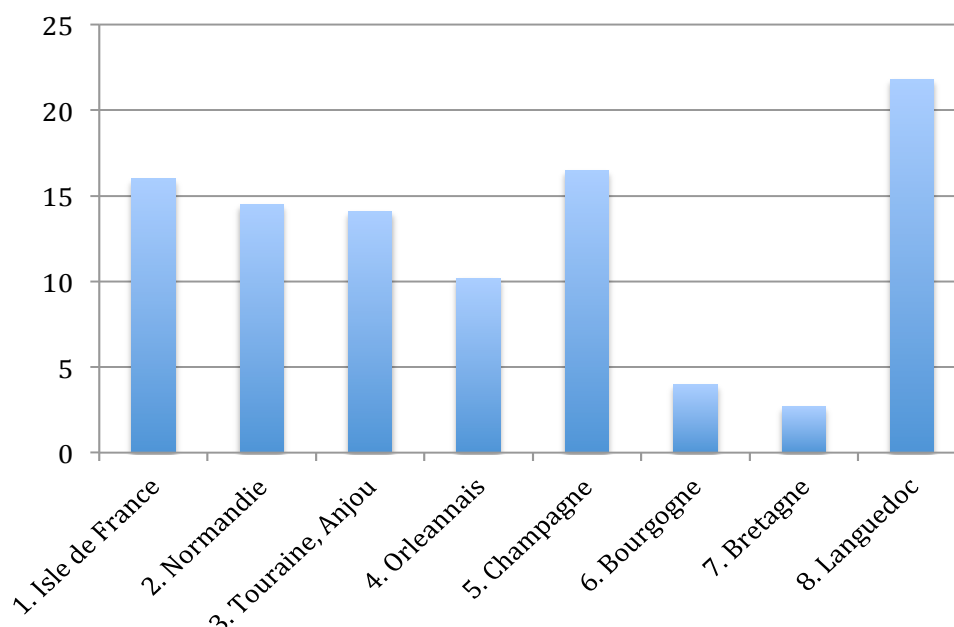
²²³ Devèze, *Les forêts françaises*, 242-244.

²²⁴ Hamish Graham, 'Policing the Forests of Pre-Industrial France', *European History Quarterly*, 33, 2 (2003), pp. 157-182, 157.

²²⁵ Archives Départementales du Nord, C10072, '*Lettre du Commissaire...*, (1788)'.

²²⁶ Similar listings of forest acreages also in: AN, E3627, '*Etat des coupes de bois...* (1669-1677)', and AN, G3, 4, '*Relevé de quotité de taille*, 1788', (based on Etats of 1674).

Fig.10 Proportion of royal forests in each *Grande Maîtrise*,
as a percentage of France's total acreage of royal forests (%) (1680)
(Source: Harleyn register)



In the *Grande Maîtrise* of Toulouse, Poublanc's survey of 2,200 *Réformation* cases treated in the 1660s by Froidour and his judges provides some information about the province's ownership structure.²²⁷ The summary in Table 4 shows that community forests dominated in terms of overall numbers, but by their nature, they were fragmented into numerous, very small units. With respect to their surface area, royal forests dominated. They represented more than twice that of Church forests, notwithstanding the presence of wealthy orders like the *Ordre de Malte* or the *Chartreux*. On the other hand, certain forests belonging to the secular clergy could be of considerable value. Those owned by the Narbonne archbishopric, mostly located within the Quillan *maîtrise*, were estimated at over 60,000 livres annual return.²²⁸ In 1748, the bishop of Carcassonne, Armand Bazin de Bezons, could contribute 40,000 livres for the construction of the episcopal palace in Carcassonne just from the sale of the *quart-de-réserve* of one of his forests in the Montagne Noire (Loubatière).²²⁹ This level of capital enclosed in timber reserves points to the existence of powerful vested interests.

²²⁷ Poublanc, *Compter*, 116.

²²⁸ AN, G7, 1349, pièces 183 and 184, 'Requête de M. l'Archevêque de Narbonne à propos des forêts dépendant de l'Archevêché, 27 décembre 1710'.

²²⁹ A. Mahul, 'Eloge historique d'Armand Bazin de Bezons', *Mémoires de la Société des arts des sciences de Carcassonne*, 2 (1856), 36.

*Table 4 Ownership status and surface area of the forests (ha)
in the Grande Maîtrise of Toulouse (1660s)
(Source: Poublanc, Compter)*

OWNER	NUMBER OF FORESTS	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL NUMBER OF FORESTS (%)	SURFACE AREA
Royal (including 'alienated' portions)	355	20.7	119,805,33 (min.)
Church	363	21.2	48,667,28
Communities	859	50.1	unknown
Private	136	7.9	unknown

The extent of private forests (noble and non-noble) is particularly difficult to estimate, but qualitative information suggests a certain concentration in the fertile Toulousian region along the Garonne, and in the Vivarais rich in ancient *baronnies*. The *paréage* cases treated by the Quillan *maîtrise* suggest that private forests were also well represented in the Pyrénées, and often owned by families of old nobility. As a result, these owners were also frequent interlocutors of the *maîtrise* officers.

Most important for the crown's purposes were the Pyrenean forests, which focused governmental attention on the three main mountain *maîtrises* of Quillan, Pamiers and Saint-Gaudens (Fig. 11). Together, the districts they covered represented nearly 73 % of the total royal forest acreage of the *Grande Maîtrise*. The very small contribution of Villeneuve-de-Berg (366 ha) is due to the large number of well-forested private *baronnies* in that particular *maîtrise*.²³⁰

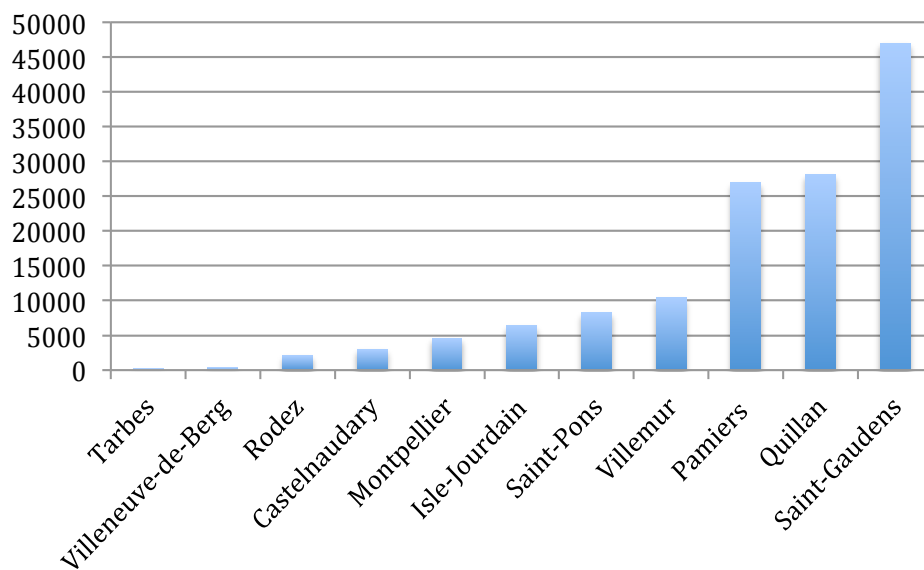
The administrative restructuring of 1689, which reduced the *Grande Maîtrise* of Toulouse to just six *maîtrises*²³¹ accentuated the predominance of Quillan even further.²³² It now

²³⁰ See Didier Catarina, *Les justices ordinaires, inférieures et subalternes de Languedoc* (Montpellier, 2003).

²³¹ Villemur, Castelnaudary, Quillan, St-Pons, Montpellier, and Villeneuve-de-Berg.

controlled over half of the total forested cover in the reconfigured *Grande Maîtrise* (51.3 %). Its ‘high-forests’ (*futaies*), well stocked in firs, in Sault, Fenouillèdes, or the more distant Madrès Mountains, appeared especially promising for the provision of ship masts and their exploitation by the *Compagnie des Pyrénées* established in 1665 by Colbert for that purpose.

Fig.11 *Acreage of royal forests in the eleven maîtrises particulières of the Grande Maîtrise of Toulouse (1671) (ha)*
(Source: AN, E3627)



Because of the specific reproductive characteristics of resinous species of trees, however, they could only be sold by individual tree (*par pied d'arbre*), instead of the standard whole-plot method (*tire-et-aire*) imposed by Colbert's *Ordonnance*. This exception to the rule was achieved by Froidour who had convinced a reticent Colbert that Pyrenean forests “doivent être régies et administrées d’une manière toute différente à celle des autres forêts du royaume.”²³³ The higher risk of fraud entailed by this single-tree method was a deplorable, albeit unavoidable, flaw, of which the authorities were well aware. Furthermore, some of the dense mountain forests were only partially harvestable, because

²³² ADHG, B1924, ‘Edit portant création de 16 grands maîtres..., février 1689’. Following an administrative error, this version of the *Edit* mentioned Rodez instead of the intended Villeneuve-de-Berg *maîtrise*. The error became subsequently corrected.

²³³ Bartoli, *Louis de Froidour*, 111. For a detailed survey of silvicultural discussions at Froidour's time, see especially pp. 95-145.

of steep gradients and lack of access to floatable rivers, so that improving roads to facilitate log transport by ox-cart was identified as another priority for the *Réformation* commissioners.²³⁴

State control in forestry, an ongoing challenge

While the proportion of royal forests varied greatly from region to region, on a national scale Fig. 9 above showed that they represented only a minor proportion of all forests. In principle, the integrity of the royal demesne was protected by the fundamental dogma of inalienability enshrined in the *Edit de Moulins* of 1566. The long-term leases to *engagistes*, which provided the crown with a safe and steady income, usually contained a re-possession clause. As a result, by 1789 half of the royal forests had been detached as *apanages*, *bois engagés*, or allocated to specific manufactures such as salt making.²³⁵ The king sometimes invoked his “*grace speciale, pleine puissance et autorité Royale*” to reward the subjects he wished to favour with free yearly firewood allocations or forest-grazing rights.²³⁶ Far more damaging to the integrity of the forested demesne was the *déclaration* of December 1652, which authorised the sale of degraded parts of the royal demesne such as “*boqueteaux, taillis rabougris ou abroutis, terres vaines et vagues, landes, marais.*”²³⁷ This edict led to considerable abuse. In Normandie, healthy high-forests have thus been declared ‘downgraded’ to be sold off and traded for a good profit on the wood markets.²³⁸ Colbert had made recovering these abusive subtractions a priority task for his commissioners.

The vast disparity between royal forests those of other owners, or the ongoing encroachments on the integrity of the demesne, risk overstating the impression of weak control over what was considered a ‘*bien public*’. By the eighteenth century the state had acquired and consolidated its jurisdictional and arbitration powers over all four types of forests. This concerned especially the forests of the clergy and the municipalities, which together totalled 30 % of the nation’s forested surface. Claiming the role of the king as

²³⁴ In 1668, Froidour was charged with inspecting works on the “Chemin de la Régordane” leading from Montpellier to Brioude in Auvergne. His account can be found in the BMT, ms 665, pièce 12.

²³⁵ Devèze, *Les forêts françaises à la veille de la Révolution*, 242.

²³⁶ AN, KK952, f.163, ‘Mémoire pour la Réformation des forests du Roy, s.d’. This mémoire is unsigned, but Devèze attributed it to Colbert, who wrote it in 1663 for the instruction of the newly-appointed *Réformation* commissioners.

²³⁷ Devèze, *Une admirable réforme*, 37-38.

²³⁸ Id., 47-48.

“protecteur, conservateur et défenseur” of the temporal possessions of the clergy, Colbert re-iterated certain obligations which by the 1660s had fallen into abeyance. He requested that all forests belonging to “ecclésiastiques et main-mortables” followed the same management principles as the royal forests. With the *quart-de-futaie* prescription, a quarter of their forests had to be ‘reserved’ to grow into high-forest. The lower wood (*taillis*) was to be harvested according to a annual rotation of contingent plots (*tire-et-aire*), whereby sixteen of the most promising young trees (*baliveaux*) had to be ‘reserved’ for restocking. Their forests also had to be surveyed and measured by an approved *arpenteur*. The edict of 1715 further confirmed the *grand-maître* in his jurisdictional powers and inspection rights over these forests, and instances of wood theft and other illegal activities on their grounds could, under certain conditions, be treated in the royal forestry courts.²³⁹

While this appears as a drastic intervention into their affairs, the Church never fully submitted. The *Assemblée Ordinaire du Clergé* of 1670 protested vigorously against Colbert’s demands, invoking the preeminence of custom over law, historical precedent, or legal inconsistencies. In 1675, at the height of the Franco-Dutch war, the Assembly threatened to withdraw its annual *don gratuit*. In 1693, a group of five *traitants* was charged with recovering the 4,600,000 livres fine arrears accumulated by the Church for years of non-compliance with forest regulations.²⁴⁰ In the new century, things were no better. Governments continued to face a string of individual legal challenges, especially from powerful regular orders like the *Ordre de Saint Jean de Jerusalem* or the *Abbaye de Clairvaux*. For the foresters on the other hand, the preeminence of the king’s jurisdiction over the temporal possessions of the clergy was an indisputable prerogative, legitimised by the forests’ general nature as a common good. According to a commentator of Gallon’s *Conférence de l’Ordonnance*, “[l]es bois des ecclésiastiques ont toujours été regardez comme étant de droit public; c’est la raison pour laquelle nos Rois dans tous les tems ont veillé à leur conservation, & les ont pris sous leur protection particulière, tant parce que l’Eglise est toujours mineure, que pour empêcher les abus que pourroient commettre les Bénéficiers au préjudice de leurs successeurs.”²⁴¹

²³⁹ On legislative aspects of the control of ecclesiastical forests of the clergy, see Antoine Pecquet, *Loix forestières de France, Commentaire historique et raisonné sur l’Ordonnance de 1669, ...* 2 vols, (Paris, 1753), vol.2, 185-262.

²⁴⁰ See Waquet, *Les Grands Maîtres*, 270-271.

²⁴¹ De Gallon, *Conférence de l’Ordonnance de Louis XIV du mois d’Août 1669* (Paris, 1752) vol.2, 163.

Similar claims were made regarding the woods of the *communautés d'habitants*. A lighter level of control was applied to private forests, which did not mean that owners were entirely free to manage and commercialise their wood as they pleased. Because of their vast coverage, they were regarded as a resource of national interest, a key reserve of *futaie* timber for large constructions on land and sea. Various edicts of the 1720s reiterated the prohibition of clearing private forests or harvesting parts of the *futaie* reserves without authorisation from the *Conseil*. Private *taillis* woods could only be harvested after a minimum of ten years. The *grand-maître* had inspection rights, especially in forests held in *paréage* with the king, or in those adjoining royal forests. These observations mitigate the impression of weak state control that could arise from considering differences based on acreages alone.

While initially the *Eaux-et-Forêts* had been principally established to manage, control and protect the crown's own forests, by the eighteenth century the institution had become a crucial instance of regulation and control for a large and diverse group of owners and users of the forests, including the large contingent of private forests. In the eyes of the *grand-maître* of Rouen, the new forestry order created by Colbert, “qui pouvait paraître extrêmement gênante pour l'ordre des particuliers, et qui semblait blesser des privilèges abusifs dans leur principe,” had, after one century, lost none of its legitimacy.²⁴² Notwithstanding Pecquet's claim, in practice, the rules were often ignored because of entrenched practices based on custom or powerful vested interests. More relevant and potentially damaging for the king's authority, however, was an unintended by-product of Colbert's intervention. While the regime he had established had crystallised into an unassailable legal and organisational framework, the context of its application on the ground was in a constant flux. As will be developed in chapter four below, this created a paradox, which holds a key to the *Eaux-et-Forêts*' increasing marginalisation on the kingdom's institutional scene.

²⁴² Citation by Pecquet, quoted in Baudrillart, *Traité*, vol.1, xv.

The *Eaux-et-Forêts*, an unloved institution

Fragile historical foundations

Throughout the five centuries of their existence, the *Eaux-et-Forêts* have sat uneasily amidst the intricate shifts and changes of the kingdom's institutions. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, legal competency for the crown forests had rested with the *baillis*. The institution was headed by a unique *souverain-maître* equipped with exclusive jurisdictional powers. Their main concerns were the protection of the traditional hunting grounds of the king and his clients mostly located near the capital, and the revenue drawn from his forests. Formally, *Eaux-et-Forêts* were part of the *Maison du Roi*, alongside the heads of the king's household (*grands maîtres du Roi*), and the *grands écuyers*, *grands veneurs* and *grands fauconniers* in charge of his hunting needs.²⁴³ The first holders of the *souveraine maîtrise des eaux et forêts* had close links to the royal circles. Clausse de Fleury, a particularly energetic *souverain-maître* and reformer of the end of the sixteenth century, was a godson of Henri II, son of a *secrétaire du roi*, and grandson of François 1er's personal doctor. Besides its enormous prestige, this office also carried considerable *gages* and privileges. The *souverain-maîtres* had total control over a small cohort of subaltern officers, *maîtres des forests* and their *lieutenants*, *capitaines forestiers* and *procureurs*, all members of the provincial notability. Many seventeenth-century *maîtres particuliers* were *gentilshommes*. In 1677, the *maître particulier* of the *maîtrise* of Villers-Cotterêts, Charles de Capendu, vicomte de Boursonne, was *Page de la Chambre du Roi*.²⁴⁴ Much less frequent was the nobility of *garde-marteaux*, which can derive from being entrusted with the fleur-de-lys-embossed *marteau*, the seal granting them wide powers of control over users and merchants in royal forests. Together, these early royal foresters oversaw the implementation of ordinances and organised the sales of timber. In the absence of a fixed official seat until the Colbertian reforms, they exercised a peripatetic form of forestry justice in the provinces.

From the sixteenth century, the expansion of the king's demesne demanded that the institution be reformed, and its jurisdiction clearly separated from that of the *sénéchaux* or *baillis*. The monopoly of the *souverain-maître* started to be eroded with the establishment,

²⁴³ Joan Blaeu, *Géographie Blaviane* (Amsterdam, 1667), vol. 7, lxxxi-lxxxij.

²⁴⁴ Charles-René d'Hozier, *Armorial général de France, dressé, en vertu de l'édit de 1696* (Paris, 1738-1741).

in 1554, of the higher appellate court for forestry cases, the *Table de Marbre*, a specialist appeal structure that complemented, as well as rivalled, the *Parlement*. The final blow came when, in May 1575, Henri III created six new *Grandes Maîtrises*, each of them headed by a *grand-maître* endowed with the same powers as the former, unique, *souverain-maître*.²⁴⁵ Despite the occasional proclamation of good intentions, the surge of venality that followed could never be permanently abolished. In 1573, the total number of subaltern officers of the new *Grandes Maîtrises* amounted to 183, with a further 448 *sergents* and *gardes* policing the forests.²⁴⁶ In the course of the next hundred years, numbers waxed and waned according to need and circumstances. With the proliferation of offices during the turbulent period from 1630 to the mid-1650s, numbers nearly tripled. When Colbert took over the forestry department from the hands of *Chancelier* Pierre Séguier in 1661, they had reached a total of 1,620.²⁴⁷

The southern half of the kingdom had not been affected by this multiplication of offices. It suffered on the contrary from critical under-administration. In Quillan for example, the control of royal forests before 1671 had largely relied on a system of local *gardes* overseen by the *sénéchaux*. A small forestry bureau established in 1561, operated by four royal officers, was hamstrung by a total lack of judicial and policing powers, whose main task was to collect a nominal fee from the exploitation of the forests on the upper reaches of the Aude. When Froidour commenced operations in 1666, one of the *gardes* had just been killed, leaving his sector of the forest totally unsupervised.²⁴⁸ Other *maîtrises* were in a comparable situation, except Toulouse, where the presence of the royal administration was more palpable. In their first reports, Froidour and the other commissioners described at length the sorry state of the district's royal forests resulting from this weak control. They had fallen prey to abusive practices by disenfranchised and unaccountable officials who, in collusion with local residents, merchants and private owners, considered that the resources of the royal forests were there for the taking.

²⁴⁵ For more details on historical roots of Eaux-et-Forêts, see Decq, *L'administration des Eaux et Forêts*.

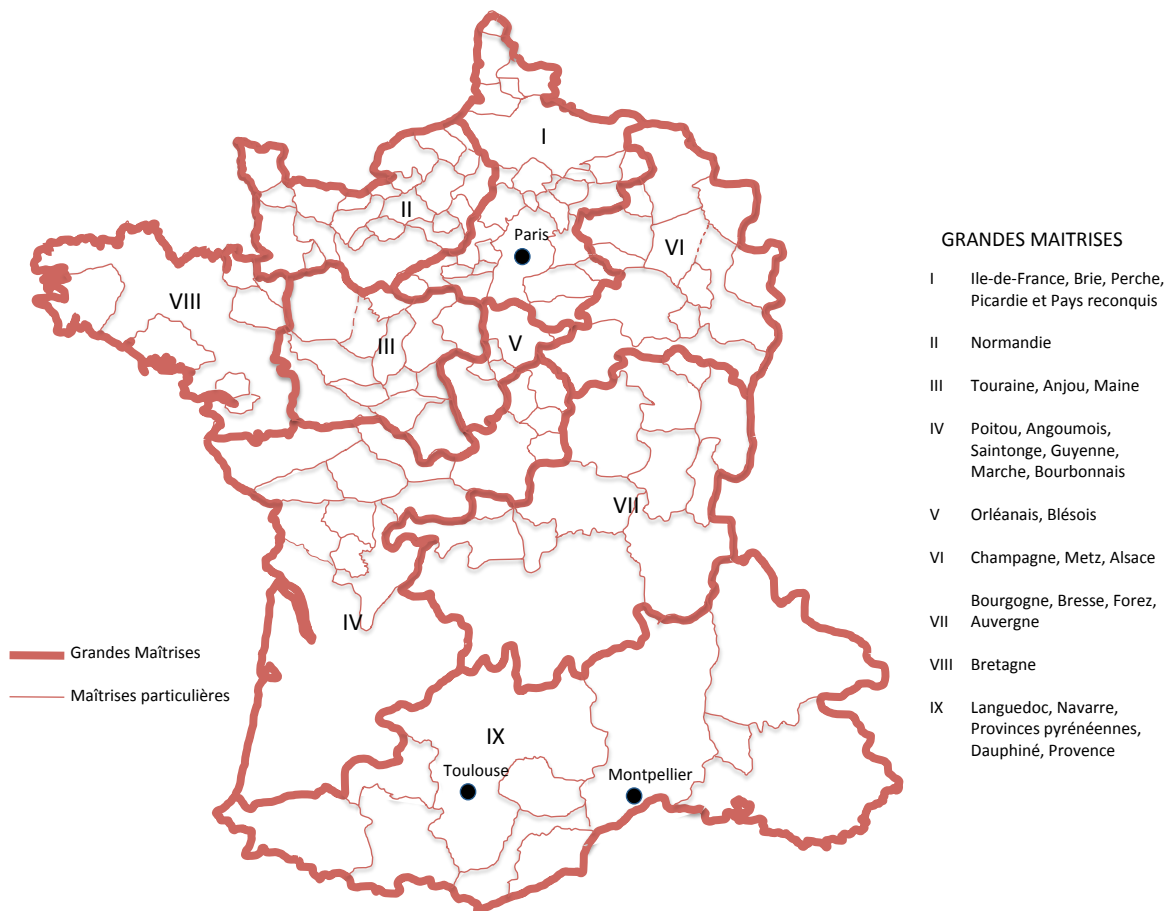
²⁴⁶ Raymond Lefebvre, Louis Bourgenot, Marie-Noëlle Grand-Mesnil, Louis Badré, *Les Eaux et Forêts du 12eme au 20eme siècle* (Paris, 1987), 106.

²⁴⁷ Id., 128. This figure includes *gardes*.

²⁴⁸ In an uncanny parallel, one of the first affairs treated by the commissioners of the Quillan *Réformation* in 1737 was the killing of a *garde* (ADH, C1255, 'Lettre à Mr. Orry, 22 octobre 1736').

As the new *de-facto* head of the *Eaux-et-Forêts*, in 1661 Colbert took on the colossal task of addressing abuses like these in every province. He started by reconfiguring the administrative forestry map, a highly heterogenous structure, the result of accidents of history and unregulated alienations, gifts, *apanages*, and haphazard acquisitions of *seigneuries* (Map 6).

Map 6 Forestry map before Colbert's reforms (1661)
(Mapbase: Devèze, *Une admirable réforme*)



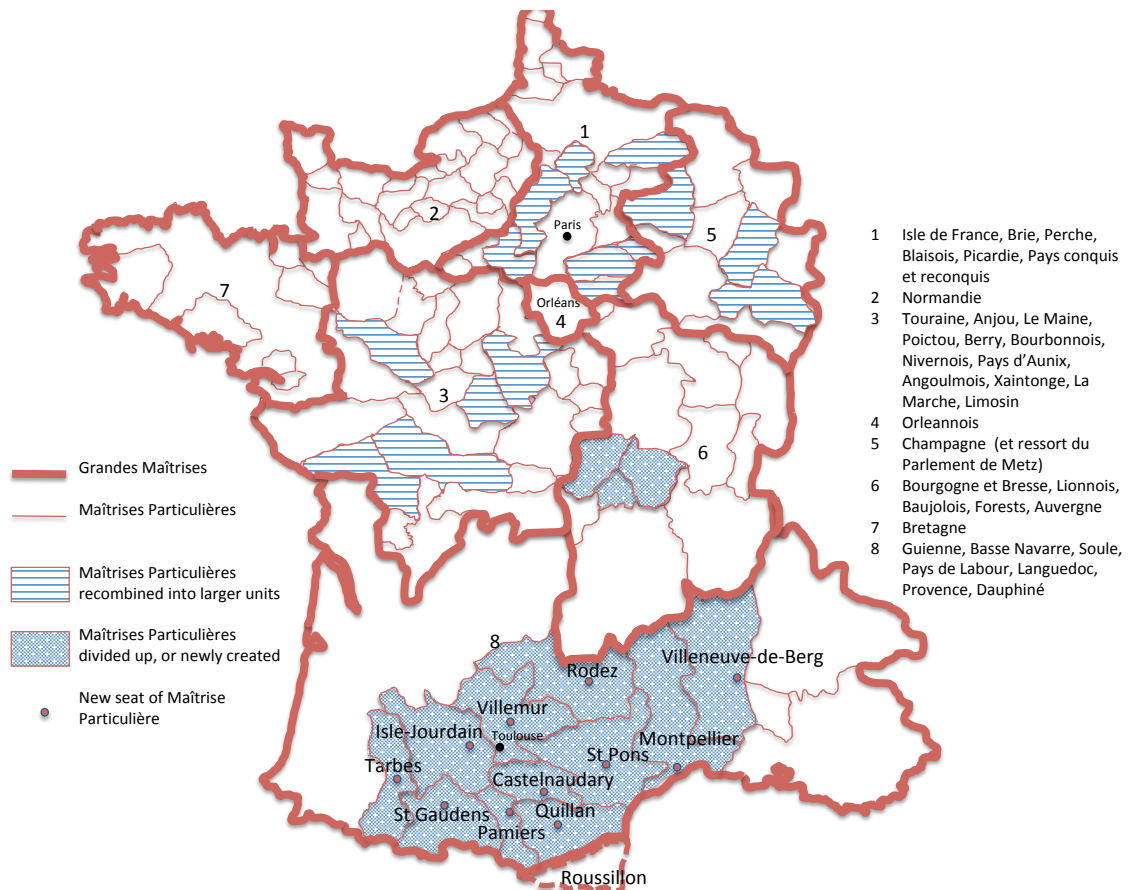
The map illustrates well the difference between a densely structured northern half, and a vastly under-administered south, stretching from the Atlantic shores to the Alpine mounts of Provence and Dauphiné. This measure was accompanied by a reduction of office numbers, which mostly affected the northern *maîtrises*. By 1674, they were trimmed back

from 1,620 to 1,333.²⁴⁹ In 1667 he commuted the offices of *grands-maîtres* into salaried, commissioned posts, a status which they retained until 1689, whereby the reimbursement of these expensive offices was to be covered by the proceeds of wood sales. In Toulouse, it took the total sales income for the period from 1668 to 1672 to reimburse the former *grand-maître*, Jehan Caulet de Cadars.²⁵⁰ He did not enjoy the benefits of that reimbursement because he was suspended and fined 8,000 livres.

Map 7 Forestry map after Colbert's reconfiguration of 1671

(Sources: 'Harleyen' register; Poublanc, *Compter*.

Mapbase: Devèze, *Une admirable réforme*)



Another urgent task was to redress the north-south discrepancy of the forestry map. Within the enormous southern unit administered by the Toulouse *Grande Maîtrise*, Colbert created in 1671 eleven *maîtrises* and six smaller sub-units (*grueries*), each of them

²⁴⁹ Lefebvre et al., *Les Eaux et Forêts du 12eme au 20eme siècle*, 147.

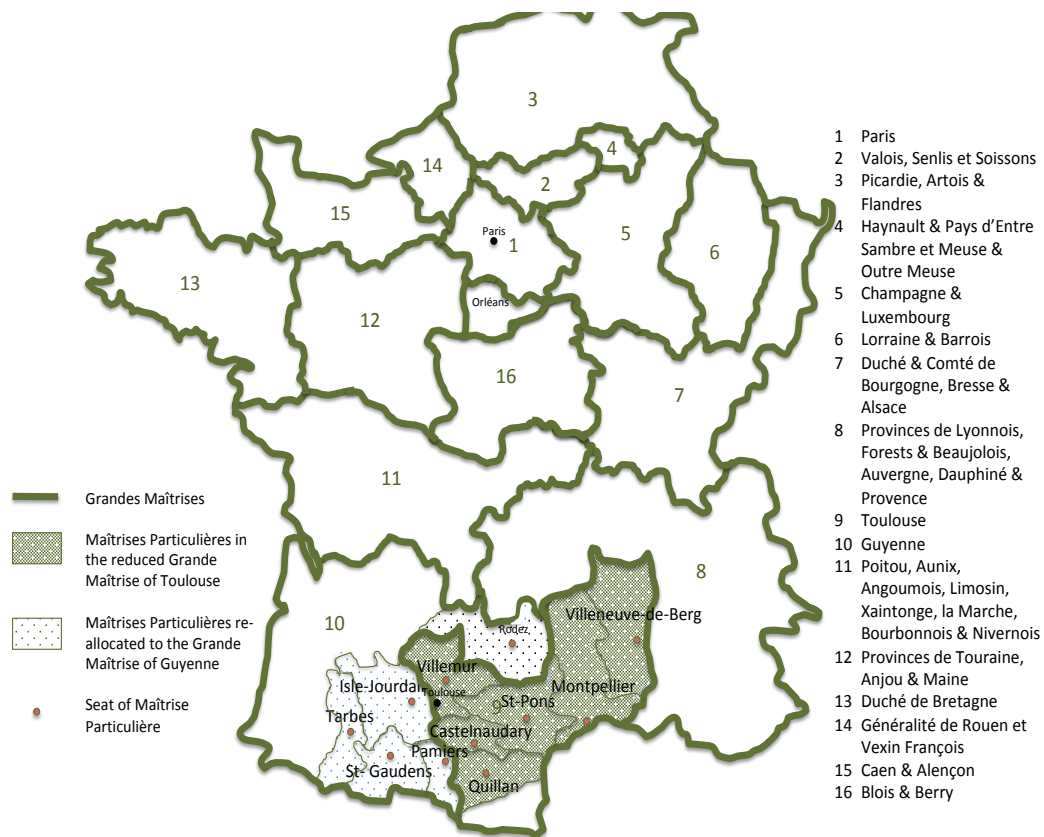
²⁵⁰ AN, G7, 297, f.iii, 'Comptes du Sr. Riquier pour les bois du Languedoc (1687)'.

including five main officers, a variable number of *gardes*, and auxiliaries such as a sworn-in suveyor, a fine collector, and a *huissier* (Map 7).²⁵¹

Six years after Colbert's death, in 1689, the map was changed again, and the structure it acquired then remained broadly constant until the fall of the institution in 1791. Venality returned to forestry: the territory was divided into sixteen *Grandes Maîtrises*, each headed by a *grand-maître* who had bought this office.²⁵² In the south, the oversized *Grande Maîtrise* of Toulouse was reduced to more workable proportions. Five of its *maîtrises particulières* became assigned to the new *Grande Maîtrise* of Guyenne, leaving Toulouse with only the six easternmost *maîtrises*. (Map 8) This reduction greatly facilitated the task of the *grand-maître* charged with overseeing them.

Map 8 Forestry map after the reconfiguration of 1689

(Sources: Devèze, Une admirable réforme, and the Edit de création de seize grands-maîtres, février 1689)



²⁵¹ AN, K 904, 4, 'Edit de création de onze maîtrises particulières et six grueries dans la Grande Maîtrise de Toulouse (mars 1671)'.

²⁵² AN, P2390, f.37-47, 'Edit de création de seize grandes maîtrises dans le Royaume, février 1689'.

As exclusive recipients of the *Conseil's lettres patentes*, the *grands-maîtres* were the main channel for the implementation of ordinary policy decisions in the provinces. During *Réformations Forestières*, they were endowed with wide discretionary powers as they could pronounce *arrêts* and *ordonnances* in their own name. According to the debates recorded in the journal of their *compagnie*, they entertained frequent and active relations, in epistolary form or in person, with the *intendant des finances* (who had *Eaux-et-Forêts* in his remit) or his *premier commis*, their main interlocutors in the capital.²⁵³ Their discussions were dominated by the defense of their own interests, apart from discussions of some high-profile cases susceptible to serve as precedence for legislation. A good example of this is the journal entry of 8 February 1727, when they discussed the case of the Chartreux order who insisted on using their high-forests regardless of the *quart-de-réserve* rule.

In their role as heads of the regional forestry district, one of their principal duties was to oversee the *gardes* and the officers of the *maîtrises particulières*. Much of this regulatory task of control, predictably, was of a bureaucratic nature, and could be undertaken from their residence in the regional capital with the assistance of a personal *secrétaire*. The “informations de vie et moeurs” they conducted for each new applicant of a *maîtrise* post was one of their cherished – and at times challenged - prerogatives. *Grands-maîtres* could also use their personal authority to avert undesirable recruitments. They signed the yearly *certificats de service* needed by the officers to receive their *gages*, and with their *taxations* they determined their *chauffages* and *journées*. They appointed all *gardes* of royal forests, and could dismiss them without further court procedure. Above all, *grands-maîtres* had disciplinary powers over *maîtrise* officers, to the first level. This included the power to fine, suspend or remove them, in which case, they could commit for their replacement. “C’est principalement dans les cas d’interdiction que le Grand-Maître a tout droit de pourvoir & de commettre, afin que le service ne manque point.”²⁵⁴ This power has however been severely curtailed after the posts returned to venal status, when they could only commit substitutes under certain conditions.

²⁵³ BNF, ms 5833, ‘Registre de délibérations des grands maîtres’.

²⁵⁴ Pecquet, *Loix*, I, 164.

Appeals to decisions of the *grands-mâîtres* pronounced outside their own seat, for example during their inspection visits (“*en réformation*”) were normally directed to the *Parlement*, the *Eaux-et-Forêts*’ longstanding nemesis. This represented a serious limitation to their jurisdictional authority, as the example of the three new *maîtrises particulières* established in 1729 in Dauphiné well illustrates. In a series of *mémoires* and requests addressed to the *Conseil*, the *grand-maitre* bitterly complained about “l’opposition opiniâtre que le Parlement de Grenoble a fait paroître dans tous les tems contre les Règlements en matière d’Eaux & Forêts, & les contradictions sans nombre que les Officiers chargés de la manutention de ces Règlements ont essuyé de la part des Officiers de cette Cour.”²⁵⁵ After a long and acrimonious procedure, the *arrêt du Conseil* of 13 June 1752 finally confirmed the *grand-maitre* in his exclusive right to pronounce judgment on *maîtrise* personnel. In the case of judgments proceeding from a commission by the *Conseil*, for example during an official *Réformation*, appeals could only be lodged with the *Conseil*, avoiding the *Parlement*’s obstructive rulings. As Pecquet remarked, “[L]e conseil est proprement un Tribunal d’administration; ainsi on peut s’y pourvoir pour ce qui regarde les parties d’administration & de police, l’exécution d’autres Arrêts du Conseil, le maintien de l’ordre que le Roi a voulu qui fût suivi.”²⁵⁶ While these prerogatives might point to a high degree of personal and professional influence over the officers, we will see that, in practice, they only hesitantly intervened in internal affairs of the *maîtrise*.

The role of the *grands-mâîtres* was not restricted to bureaucratic activity from their seat in the regional capital. At least once a year, they travelled to each of the *maîtrises* to inspect the royal forests, control the registers and the general performance of the officers. The most important task they performed during these visits was to determine, for each district, the nature and volume of the wood to be offered at the next auctions, and to preside over those taking place in the current year.

Administrative and contentious affairs concerning the merchants, owners, and users of the forests formed another prominent part of *grand-maitre* activity. During their visits, they were entitled to pronounce sentence on ordinary cases of the public, whereby appeals were normally directed to the *Parlements*. In some sensitive cases, “pour épargner à leur décision la disgrâce d’être anéanties par d’autres des parlements,” *grands-mâîtres* diverted

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 136-137.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 3.

appeals away from the *Parlements* by requesting a commission from the *Conseil*,²⁵⁷ in which case they were treated there. They also examined requests from private and clerical forest owners for cuts outside the regular harvesting schedule (*coupes extraordinaires*). These requests were forwarded to the *intendant* in Paris, with an accompanying suggestion on how to proceed. In most cases, their advice was confirmed. As Michel Antoine observed, by the 1730s, these requests had become so numerous that the *Conseil* - formally responsible for authorising each of these requests individually - only intervened in some rare cases whose outcome “ferait jurisprudence,” such as those touching on the integrity of the demesne, or raising political issues or local sensitivities.²⁵⁸ In his multi-faceted role, the regional *grand-maître* represented a pivotal executive link between the centre and the province.

Five categories of maîtrise officers

Colbert’s reforms also clarified and consolidated the rights and duties of the five categories of officers who operated the *maîtrises particulières*: *maître particulier*, *lieutenant*, *procureur du roi*, *garde-marteau* and *greffier*. Collectively, their main areas of responsibility were four-fold. Firstly, in their judicial role they held weekly sessions addressing minor claims, requests or offenses reported by the *gardes*, they forwarded appeals to the regional *Table de Marbre*, and held assises once a year. Secondly, in a more executive function, their main responsibility was to manage and inspect the royal forests within their remit according to a schedule determined by the *Ordonnance*. In-between these visits, the forests were left to the scrutiny of the patrolling *gardes*, duty-bound to report weekly on their visits. Work on the ground also included *bornage* operations, the organisation and control of replantation schemes, and the marking of the plots (*assiette*) to be offered at the autumnal auctions. Planning and organising these events required their attention for the best part of the year. Their third main area of responsibility concerned the non-royal forests in their district. They could inspect private, clerical or communal forests on an ad-hoc basis, and they passed on to the *grand-maître* the authorisation requests for cuts in private high forests received on that occasion. Fourthly, they also managed and policed river fishing, and ensured that waterways remained in good order for the all-important river transportation of timber.

²⁵⁷ Waquet, *Les Grands Maîtres*, 220.

²⁵⁸ Antoine, *Le Conseil du Roi*, 463.

The various *maîtrise* offices shared some common general characteristics. Applicants had to be at least twenty-five years old (unless granted a special derogation), be of the Catholic faith, and reside in the vicinity of the seat. Those with relatives in the *maîtrise* were in theory excluded. They were established (*pourvus*) at the *Conseil* after payment of the fees and scrutiny of their “vie et moeurs” by the *grand-maître*, after which they were formally ‘received’ at the *Table de Marbre*. Their legal and technical suitability was confirmed by an examination, which for *greffiers*, *huissiers*, and *gardes* was limited to the relevant articles of the 1669 *Ordonnance*. They could only claim their *gages* upon presenting a *certificat de service* signed by the *grand-maître*. They were barred from taking up another judicial office (except the *lieutenant*), from engaging in trading activities, participating in wood auctions, or managing the estates of seigneurs or other forest owners.

Beyond these common characteristics, the distinctive attributes and responsibilities of each post were key to understanding their work practices and, at times, misuse of office. The *maître particulier* was considered *primus inter pares*. According to Pecquet, as formal head of the *maîtrise*, he had a determining influence on the quality of the service of the whole unit. “L’état d’un maître particulier n’est point un état de repos, [...] la vigilance qu’il peut avoir [...] peut beaucoup contribuer à faire respecter les Loix forestieres, & par conséquent à assurer le bon ordre public.”²⁵⁹ His apparel included the ceremonial sword, a prerogative he shared only with the *garde-marteau*. A law degree was not required, but his judicial role was important. He presided over the weekly tribunal sessions held at the *maîtrise*, and at the behest of the *procureur du roi* he could pass sentence at the first level, provided it was validated by the other officers. As a graduate, he could instruct cases, but only at the *procureur*’s behest. Otherwise, this task was left to the *lieutenant*. He ensured that correct procedures were being followed for the all-important yearly wood auctions and after-sales control of the merchants’ cuts (*récollements*). In addition, the *maître particulier* was required to visit all the royal forests in his district every six months. He was also entitled to inspect non-royal forests without previous solicitation, and more generally launch inquiries into anything that could affect the royal forests.

In case of incapacity or absence, the *lieutenant* replaced the *maître particulier*. It was a difficult post, which frequently brought its holder into conflict with the head. As an “officier de robe longue” the deputy head was necessarily a graduate of law, but the office carried only modest *gages* and limited rights, and symbolic prerogatives like its *droit de*

²⁵⁹ Pecquet, *Loix*, I, 229.

préséance were regularly challenged. The most critical role in the *maîtrise* fell on the *procureur du roi*. This officer, who, ideally, was to show exceptional qualities of “probité, lumières, et attention,” was for Pecquet “l’âme des maîtrises.” In his essentially judicial role, he represented the king’s interests, and warranted the assiduity and professional zeal of the other officers. In day-to-day forestry business, he initiated and pursued all administrative or contentious procedures brought to the *maîtrise*.²⁶⁰

The most intriguing office in the *maitrise* team was that of the *garde-marteau* - literally the ‘keeper-of-the-hammer’. This officer represented the physical link between deskwork and control on the ground. A law degree was not required, but he needed a good grasp of sylvicultural and local knowledge. As *garde-marteaux* typically formed long dynasties, training was provided through familial apprenticeship. Their presence was required at all official sessions, where they were entitled to wear a sword and had deliberative voice, and could replace the *maître particulier* or *lieutenant* if they were absent. The prestige and authority associated with this office derived from their custodianship of the *maîtrise*’s fleur-de-lys-embossed hammer, considered the material representation of the royal seal. This tagging hammer, which formally authorised cuts and other interventions in the forests, was securely kept in a casket locked by three keys, held by the head, the *procureur du roi*, and the *garde-marteau*. As an additional prerogative, *garde-marteaux* also owned a personal hammer for the tagging of special types of wood. Their main responsibilities consisted in overseeing *martelage* operations in the planning phase of the auctions, and controlling the cuts at the end of the merchants’ exploitations. In their frequent patrol rounds in the forests, they also supervised the work of the *gardes*. This role as the *maîtrise*’s mobile instance of control was a crucial element in their functioning. According to Pecquet, this officer could do as much harm as good in the king’s forests depending on the use he made of this monopoly.²⁶¹ As this study will expose, the *garde-marteau*’s regular and close interaction with local forest users, workers and merchants, also made him into a particularly ‘corruptible’ element of the *maîtrise* team.

The *greffier*, who was often also a local notary, was the bureaucratic arm of the *maîtrise*. Before Colbert’s reforms, clerical work in forestry had been attributed on an ad-hoc basis, often to local notaries. When the commissioners started inspecting the paper work of the *maîtrises*, they often found official documents “dispersez dans les maison particulières de

²⁶⁰ Id., 235.

²⁶¹ Id., 252-259.

ceux qui [...] auront exercé [le greffe] et de leurs veuves et héritiers.”²⁶² This disorder and neglect sparked significant changes in the bureaucratic organisation of *maîtrises particulières*.²⁶³ As regular, sworn-in officers, *greffiers* were forthwith asked to appear in public “en habit décent, c’est-à-dire robe de palais, et en habit court noir quand ils travaillent chez les juges en leurs maisons.”²⁶⁴ They were required to keep eight different registers, each with a specific purpose, to be securely housed in *armoires* located in the forestry building.²⁶⁵ This elaborate code of practice aimed at preserving for the long term a legally-binding record of all operations, forest inspections, sales, and tribunal work. Being privvy to the affairs of their colleagues and fellow residents, the *greffiers* whose office carried particularly low *gages* enjoyed some uncanny leverage. Durand’s study of Languedoc administrators between the 1670s and the 1780s demonstrates that this particular group was frequently involved in dubious dealings.²⁶⁶ Crucially, the *greffier*’s presence at all administrative and judicial sessions made him legally co-responsible for any irregularities. For Jean Roillet, *greffier* of the Quillan *maîtrise*, this aspect of his work turned into a painful reality: as a result of Quillan’s *second Réformation* he was prosecuted, briefly jailed, fined, and suspended for one year.²⁶⁷

The good functioning of the forestry institution as a whole, then, depended on the quality of service and professional practices of these officers in their diverse, complementary and inter-connected roles. On the other hand, *Grandes Maîtrises* and *maîtrises particulières* did not operate in an institutional void. During the five centuries of its existence, the *Eaux-et-Forêts* institution was also confronted with ongoing challenges to its authority and legitimacy from rival institutions that could severely reduce their efficacy.

²⁶² AN, KK952, f.2, ‘Mémoire pour la réformation’, 1663.

²⁶³ ADHG, 8B25, f.421-22, ‘Procès-verbal de l’établissement de la maîtrise de Quillan, (31 octobre 1671).

²⁶⁴ Pecquet, *Loix*, I, 264.

²⁶⁵ These registers were: 1: Official acts, 2: All operations pertaining to yearly wood auctions, 3: Reports of statutory forest inspections, 4: Hearings, 5: Sales contracts, 6: Navigation, river transportation of timber, fishing and hunting, 7: Forests of ecclesiastics, communities and private owners, 8: Depot of all papers brought to the *greffe*.

²⁶⁶ Stéphane Durand, ‘Corruption and Anticorruption in France between the 1670s and the 1780s: The Example of the Provincial Administration of Languedoc’, in: Kroeze, et al., *Anticorruption*, pp. 153-166.

²⁶⁷ See below, p. 216-7.

A contested jurisdiction

As well as an administrative body, the *Eaux-et-Forêts* were also a *juridiction extraordinaire*.²⁶⁸ From the outset, monarchs had willed that forestry jurisdiction remain distinct from general jurisprudence. In the words of one *avocat-général* at the Paris *Parlement*, bodies such as the *Bureaux des finances*, *Amirautés*, *Greniers à sel* or *Eaux-et-Forêts* were all concerned with “des matières singulières [...] qui devaient et pouvaient raisonnablement être l’objet d’un ordre particulier de jurisprudence.”²⁶⁹ In forestry, this distinction was particularly important because of the need to protect the kingdom’s forests against profit-driven short-term interests and attempts to manage and exploit one’s property freely, unshackled by official regulations. Royal or non-royal, all forests, conceptually, were considered a *bien public* for which the state claimed tutelage, and which was best served by a specific legal framework.

This jurisdictional separatedness, however, was an irritant for other institutions that perceived *Eaux-et-Forêts*’ judicial prerogatives as infringing their own.²⁷⁰ Already the brief episode of the *révolte cabochienne* in 1413²⁷¹ saw a first attempt at eliminating the office of the *souverain-maître*, claiming it to be “inutile, onéreux pour le trésor et le peuple.”²⁷² In 1655, the *maîtres des forêts* of Rouen had to seek an *évocation générale* of forestry appeals to the *Conseil* “to overcome the resistance of those *parlementaires* who had a vested material interest in impeding the introduction of new forestry regulations.”²⁷³ Such mistrust of *Parlements* was not surprising given the fresh memories of their involvement in the *Fronde*, but similar challenges to the legitimacy of the institution and the authority of its members lingered on for the next century and a half. The final blow came with the edict of May 1788, which incorporated all specialist jurisdictions into ordinary tribunals, thus reducing the forestry institution to a mere administrative body.

²⁶⁸ Xavier Emmanuelli, *Etat et pouvoirs dans la France des XVIe-XVIIIe siècles* (Paris, 1992), 146.

²⁶⁹ Quoted by Pecquet, in Baudrillart, *Traité*, vol.1, xvij.

²⁷⁰ For the sixteenth century, see Devèze, *La vie de la forêt française*, vol.II (323-326).

²⁷¹ The ‘révolte cabochienne’ lasted from April to August 1413, whereby, backed by popular support of the Parisians, the Duc de Bourgogne attempted to impose reforms limiting the powers of Charles VI.

²⁷² Decq, *L’Administration*, vol.1, 74.

²⁷³ AN, U620, f.391-2. Cited in David Parker, ‘Sovereignty, Absolutism and the Function of the Law in Seventeenth-Century France’, *Past & Present*, 122 (February 1989), pp. 36-74, 70.

Parlementaire obstruction

Institutional antagonism against the *Eaux-et-Forêts* crystallised mostly around the *Parlements* and the *Etats*, whereby the former were cited as the most resolute obstructors of forestry jurisdiction. The formal establishment of the new *grandes maîtrises* in 1575 was received with suspicion by the *Parlements*, sparking a two centuries-long war of attrition against their perceived rival, motivated as much by the defense of their jurisdictional competencies as by private interests, as many *parlementaires* were also landowners. They had equally resented the establishment in 1554 of the *Tables de Marbre*, which introduced a further judicial layer between the *maîtrises* and the *Parlements*. In Toulouse, the bureaux of these new forestry appeal courts were, tellingly, relegated to a dark and dank corner of the *Parlement's* large building complex.²⁷⁴ In terms of personnel, they overlapped partly with the *Parlements*. In their ordinary weekly sessions, which were in theory presided by the *grand-maître* or his *lieutenant général*, these hybrid courts received appeals from the *maîtrises particulières* for matters of “fonds et propriété des eaux et forêts du Roi, îles, rivières, entreprises sur icelles”, and other forms of forest holdings.²⁷⁵ Appeals to these numerous cases were directed to the *Parlement* for final sentence. In matters of “usages, abus, délits et malversations commises dans les eaux et forêts,” the *Tables de Marbre* acted as final instances. Here, the sessions were presided by the first president of the *Parlement* (or his substitute), and comprised the seven most senior *conseillers* of the *Parlement's Grand-Chambre*, as well as the most senior officers of the *Table de Marbre*. This highly complex and unwieldy structure was used as the *Parlements'* long arm in forestry affairs, a situation that was particularly conducive to a deleterious atmosphere generating ongoing competency squabbles with the *maîtrises* and the *grand-maître*.

Unsurprisingly, *parlementaire* wariness guided Colbert's choice of commissioners for his *Réformation Générale* of the 1660s. Out of seventy-five commissioners, subdelegates and judges, twenty were *intendants*, *maîtres des requêtes*, or close relatives of the minister, but the bulk comprising thirty-two officers from *présidiaux*, *sénéchaussées* or *bailliages* were legal professionals at intermediate levels of the judiciary. Only four of Colbert's

²⁷⁴ See the description in Poublanc, *Compter*, 254-5.

²⁷⁵ Antoine, *Guide des recherches*, 292.

commissoners were *parlementaires*.²⁷⁶ For his operation in Languedoc, Froidour followed suit. In his report to the *Contrôleur Général* about the establishment of the province's new-style *maîtrises particulières*, he harked back on the familiar theme of *parlementaire* obstruction to *maîtrise* jurisdiction. "Nous avons remarqué une troisième cause [of mismanagement] qui est l'impuissance de ces mesmes officiers dont l'autorité légitime a esté opprimée par celle du parlement qui en toutes occasions a favorisé les délinquans et les usagers peut-estre par l'intérêt que les particuliers de ce corps avoient à la continuation des désordres."²⁷⁷ As a result, not one of Froidour's *Réformation* judges or subdelegates was a *parlementaire*. As mentioned above, this mistrust caused him to move the *maîtrise particulière* away from Toulouse to the small town of Villemur, "pour tirer les maîtres hors des sollicitations des personnes puissantes de laditte ville."²⁷⁸ After the end of the *Réformation* process in 1673, Froidour, who as *grand-maître* was no longer protected by his commissioner's powers, became the target of *parlementaire* assaults. He complained that "non seulement le Parlement favorisait lesdites entreprises [des juges ordinaires sur la juridiction des forêts], mais qu'il retombait dans tous les abus du passé, favorisant en tout et partout les délinquans, recevant les appellations, obmisso medio, du siège de la Table de marbre, évoquant et recevant toutes sortes de causes au préjudice de la juridiction des forêts."²⁷⁹

Forestry-*Parlement* antagonism came to a head during the institutional crisis triggered by the war of Spanish Succession. In February 1704, an edict removed the *Tables de marbre* and created instead in each *Parlement* a new *chambre des Eaux-et-Forêts*, to be staffed with a plethora of new officers. This incorporation of the former forestry appeal court with the *Parlement's chambre des requêtes* drastically increased *parlementaire* leverage in forestry. In 1708, the *maître particulier* of Saint-Pons complained that a number of contentious forestry cases channelled directly to the *chambre*, thus by-passing the *maîtrises*, were never finalised "faute d'y estre poursuivies."²⁸⁰ For merchants and private landowners too, the new structure was a boon. In 1704, a small group of merchants lodged a request to remove the extra fee claimed by Quillan's officers for their task of controlling the timber rafts floated on the Aude. Wood merchant Guillaume Bertrand and the marquis du Vivier de Lansac thus secured an *arrêt du Parlement*, which freed them from paying

²⁷⁶ Based on Devèze, *Une admirable réforme*, passim.

²⁷⁷ ADHG, 1A12, t.1, f.231 v., 'Procès-verbal d'avis, Froidour, 27 juillet 1668'.

²⁷⁸ Id., f.240.

²⁷⁹ ADHG 1A12, t.1, f.248. Quoted in Bartoli, 'Louis de Froidour', 32.

²⁸⁰ AN, G7, 1349, f.160r. 'Lettre Sr.Roiré, 10 octobre 1708'.

that fee.²⁸¹ For ordinary residents, it was an opportunity to reverse unpalatable rulings pronounced during the last *Réformation*. Sr Catala, seigneur de Rocquefer et la Fajolle, could thus re-claim possession of one of his forests that Froidour had incorporated into the royal domain.²⁸² In Montauban, where *maîtrise* officers had applied sentence to a house owner who kept wood stolen from royal forests in his cellar to be sold on the black market, the owner appealed to the *Parlement* to overturn the sentence, driving the alarmed *maître particulier* to turn to the *intendant* in Paris for help. In his letter, he referred, once again, to the “mille chicaneries auxquelles les habitants desdites villes, acoutumés a n’acheter que du bois de délit pour leur chauffage, m’exposeront par voie du parlement.”²⁸³

This institutional crisis of the 1700s proved particularly damaging for the personal authority of the *grand-maître*. In a letter of 15 April 1705, *grand-maître* Claude Anceau complained that the practice of reducing fine amounts, particularly frequent amongst the judges of the *chambre*, encouraged merchant fraud: “Ce qu’ils retireront du délit qu’ils auront commis sera souvent au-dessus des amendes auxquelles ils pourront estre condamnnez.”²⁸⁴ The changes in personnel caused by the establishment of the new *chambre* also created uncertainty in established precedence rankings. *Grand-maître* Claude Anceau observed: “Dans la chambre des requêtes il y a un fauteuil dans l’angle où personne ne s’assoit, et à la gauche de ce fauteuil siègent les deux présidents des requêtes et à la droite de ce fauteuil est le Doyen de lad. chambre et puis le reste des conseillers selon l’ordre du tableau; si le *grand-maître* estoit obligé de siéger immédiatement après les deux présidents de la chambre, il arriveroit que le Doyen auroit une place au dessus du *grand-maître*.”²⁸⁵

In later decades, the status of the *Tables de Marbres* became confused. The controversial *chambres* were abolished in Paris, Bordeaux, Dijon, Rouen, and Metz. In Besançon, Toulouse and Aix, the *Parlements* were given a “*chambre des requêtes incorporant celle des Eaux et Forêts*,” but in the other regions, they retained total control. In Toulouse and Bordeaux, Henri de Coigny contended that the *Parlements* continued using their role as

²⁸¹ AN, G7, 1349, p.110, ‘Arrêt de règlement du Parlement Toulouse, 15 janvier 1704’. The *droits de passe* were restored by *Lettres Patentes* on 2.September 1706.

²⁸² AN, G7, 1349, p.240, ‘Mémoire de grand-maître Claude Anceau, (février 1714)’.

²⁸³ AN, G7,1349, f.32, ‘Lettre du Sr. Domingon,... (18 avril 1704). The arrêt du Parlement against him was effectively overturned on 10 June 1704.

²⁸⁴ AN, G7, 1349, f.87v. ‘Lettre de grand-maître Claude Anceau, 15 avril 1705’.

²⁸⁵ AN, G7, 1349, p.80, ‘Mémoire pour Mr.Desmarets, undated but probably 1705’.

mouthpieces of popular grievances as an effective weapon against *maîtrise* intervention.²⁸⁶ After the 1760s, the *grand-maître* became particularly exposed to *parlementaire* obstruction in his arbitration role for contentious cases of commonland partition between communities and *seigneurs*. With cases involving the *Conseil*, *Parlements* and *grands-maîtres* accumulating, unabated, throughout the rest of the century, it can be assumed that, *in fine*, the *Parlements* never lost their grip on forestry.

The Etats

While France's *Parlements* were commonly described as the foresters' nemesis, the relationships of the *Eaux-et-Forêts* with the provincial *Etats* (where they existed) were more ambiguous. The *Etats* of Languedoc, but also those of smaller Pyrenean entities like Comminges, Foix and Bigorre, drew strength from a their popular basis in local villages and towns. In Languedoc, they used their *don gratuit* to force moderations of collective fines imposed on communities for non-compliance with forestry regulations. In 1673, a request by the *sindic du Languedoc* moved Colbert to reduce the penalties "à l'égard des communautez dont les condamnations exedoient ce qu'elles portoient de taille ordinaire."²⁸⁷ In the Comminges district covering the heavily forested higher basin of the Garonne, there was a long history of legal quibbles opposing the *syndics des Etats* and the *maîtrise* of Saint-Gaudens. Froidour needed much diplomatic skill to overcome the opposition of the minuscule, but pugnacious, *Etats* of Foix against the establishment of his *maîtrise* in Pamiers in 1671. The forests of that district, a key supply source for Toulouse, turned this event into a sensitive issue for all participants, merchants, owners, users, and the crown. The plea to retain control of their forestry affairs, lodged with the *Etats de Foix* by the *sindic* of Haut-Comminges, sparked a long and convoluted legal process. Their president, Francois-Etienne de Caulet, bishop of Pamiers, argued that the *Etats* were well capable of managing the forests themselves. On closer analysis, it appears that *Etats* resistance was also driven by the private interests of a powerful alliance of influential delegates led by the bishop, the marquis de Rabat and the baron de Gudanes. These forest-owning members of local nobility²⁸⁸ were joined in their opposition by other influential local forest owners, *engagistes* or *fermiers*. Powerful vested interests, compounded by fuzzy jurisdictional

²⁸⁶ See Henri de Coincy, *La Grande Maîtrise de Guyenne au XVIIIe siècle*, *Revue des Eaux et Forêts* (1928), pp. 1-15; 69-83, 7-9.

²⁸⁷ ADHG, 1A12, t.1., f.30v., 'Procès-verbal de Réformation Générale ... Toulouse, 29 juillet 1673,' quoted in Poublanc, *Compter*, 198-199.

²⁸⁸ Poublanc, *Compter*, 200-201.

competencies and institutional rivalry between the *Parlements* of Bordeaux and Toulouse, all combined to paralyse the work of the *maîtrise* for four years.²⁸⁹ Even if Froidour finally prevailed in 1676, the determined attitude of the *Etats* caused the new *maîtrise* to start on a particularly precarious footing.

On the other hand, the impression of an irredeemably confrontational relationship arising from these examples must be offset against observations drawn from some of their practices. *Parlementaires* and officers were for example well aware of the benefit to be had from associating in fraud. In the first decades of the seventeenth century, a number of Breton magistrates, including *président à mortier* Christophe Foucquet, committed, in league with local foresters, “de très grands abus et malversations” in the royal forests. Over the years it amounted to a considerable offense, for which the *procureur de Réformation* claimed 400,000 livres damage and interest.²⁹⁰ Moreover, for royal officers there was no incompatibility between their *maîtrise* work and entering into service of prominent *Etats* members like the archbishop of Narbonne. In Quillan, *maîtrise* officers were sent as *Etats* delegates for the town. Furthermore, *parlementaires* and foresters were connected through multiple direct kinship links, through marriage or via the wider kinship sphere. The family of the *garde-marteau* of Toulouse, Sr Bartellemy de Gramont, included several *parlementaires*, including a *président des enquêtes*, and Toulouse’s demoted *grand-maître*, Jehan Caulet de Cadars, had close family links with the *Parlement conseiller* Jean de Melet. Even more convincingly, the *Etats* could be conduits for constructive improvement proposals. In 1684, Froidour used the *Etats* to plead for a flexible approach on forest-grazing rules for the Pyrenean communities, whose livelihoods depended on animal husbandry, leading the *Conseil* to consent.²⁹¹

From the preceding analysis emerges the picture of a particularly unsettled institutional, social and political basis for the early modern *Eaux-et-Forêts*, despite the institution’s centuries-old existence. With its defiant rural populations, influential forest owners or shrewd wood merchants, the regional context in which the royal foresters operated represented a constant challenge to their authority and the efficacy of their service. In

²⁸⁹ The complexities of this particular crisis are described in Maurice Durand-Barthez, *La Maîtrise particulière des Eaux et Forêts de Comminges, des origines à 1789*. Thèse de l’Ecole des Chartes (Paris, 1937), 323-330. See also Bartoli, ‘Louis de Froidour’, 36-39.

²⁹⁰ Devèze, *Une admirable réforme*, 27.

²⁹¹ AN, G7, 294, f.134 (art.2) et f.162 (art.6), ‘Extrait du Mémoire présenté par les députés de la province de Languedoc (1684)’.

theory, these difficulties were not insuperable. Colbert's reforms had established a solid organisational framework, with well-defined professional duties and responsibilities, under the close guardianship of the regional *grand-maître*. Outwardly, a well-regulated, rational system of management and control warranted the smooth functioning of forestry work, and limited the scope for negligent practice or fraud. To better understand why this ideal was never fulfilled is the focus of the two next chapters. The prosopographical survey of Quillan's forestry officers and the analysis of their practices will be guided by two fundamental and complementary questions. Did their status as mid-ranking office-holders contribute to enhance their social position, consolidating by the same token the authority of the whole institution? Or did their local anchorage provide attractive alternatives, outside the remit of their service to the king? If so, how did this impact on the quality of their service?

CHAPTER THREE

THE MID-RANKING FORESTRY OFFICE, AN UNCOMFORTABLE POST

As stated in chapter one, the prosopographical treatment of our corpus of *maîtrise* foresters combines a statistical approach with individual biographical data. This mixed approach sharpens the contours of this group as a cohesive entity, moved by common service to the king and his forestry interests. Integrating personal histories and elements of network and patronage sheds light on the strategies forestry families developed to uphold their place among the social elites of a provincial town of small size and scant institutional infrastructure.

Central to this nexus of questions is the issue of social status. For early modern contemporaries, the notion of 'social status' could not be reduced to a single factor such as wealth, birth, education, or office. It reflected a complex reality. Bluche and Solnon's analysis of the *capitation* of 1695 demonstrated that, in official perception, social stratification was indiscriminately based on a combination of royal office and non-venal

activities, for example in finance or commerce.²⁹² In such a complex and fluid society, recovering the social positioning of royal officers and their strategies for recognition and advancement forces us to draw upon a wide range of quantitative and qualitative sources, which can inform us on a broad palette of themes linked to the forestry office: financial aspects, privileges, length of residency, education, the honour and respectability with which it was associated, the dynastic stability it conferred, but also on other major organising principles of local societies such as wealth distribution and networking opportunities.

This multi-layered approach will allow us to identify the group's characteristics from three complementary perspectives, their own, their contemporaries, and their hierarchical superiors. It can recover some of the lived reality of its members, including the normative influence on their service of economic and political factors located outside the reach of the royal administration. This study will therefore examine the strategies developed by forestry officers in their triple function, as heads of families aspiring to social advancement, as constituent members of an ambitious and distinctive small-town oligarchy, and as servants of the king. It will ask how they reconciled the various, and often contradicting, facets of these identities.

This chapter will start by analysing some quantitative aspects of their office, to be followed by a more general survey of the qualitative characteristics of the forestry career. In the last part dedicated to the officers' insertion in their urban environment, the focus will shift onto their relationships with local nobles and wood merchants, each animated by their own set of interests in the region's forests and their ligneous resources.

The forestry office, a profitable financial investment?

Volatile office prices

The financial value of an office is a crucial marker of the officer's place in society. As a marketable good, it was also an object of intense speculation. Forestry offices were no exception. During our period of study, their market prices showed great variability and

²⁹² François Bluche, Jean-François Solnon, *La véritable hiérarchie sociale de l'ancienne France; les tarifs de la première capitation de 1695* (Paris, 1983).

volatility in space and time.²⁹³ Unsurprisingly, provincial seats were valued much less highly than their counterparts in the metropolises. In 1729, the *maître particulier* office of the district of Paris was acquired by Jean-Louis Nicolas Trinquand for 66,000 livres,²⁹⁴ while around the same time Pierre Marsol in Quillan had to mobilise three times less for the same office (21,000 livres).²⁹⁵ The value for Quillan is in line with similar offices of other peripheral *maîtrises*, like the Alsacian *Grande Maîtrise* of Metz, where *maître particulier* offices averaged 21,000 livres.²⁹⁶ For other categories, the Paris-province disparity was even greater. In the prestigious *maîtrise* of St Germain en Laye overseeing one of the king's favourite hunting grounds, the *garde-marteau* office was traded in 1689 at 12,000 livres, while in Vesoul (Franche-Comté) the same office was worth eight times less, selling for a mere 1,500 livres.²⁹⁷

To rein in this volatility, the government sporadically decreed price controls, as with Colbert's intervention of 1665, aimed at containing runaway prices of judicial offices in the sovereign courts. Their impact, however, remained short-lived. Actual prices, which could at times reach a multiple of the original official evaluation, continued to react to personal circumstances, the economic conjuncture, the potential for profit in the long term, or the perceived prestige attached to certain locations or office categories.²⁹⁸ These real values are precious indicators of the economic and social position of the buyer. For Robert Descimon, "l'échelle des valeurs des offices reflète les hiérarchies sociales de l'époque, elle en constitue même un indicateur et un révélateur."²⁹⁹

When buying an office, the 'principal' was not the only aspect an officer had to consider. The bundle of fees to be paid at various stages of the process could amount to considerable sums. In Christophe Blanquie's calculations, for the office of *conseiller* at the *présidial* of Bazas (Gironde) acquired from the *parties casuelles* for 800 livres in the 1750s, the candidate paid 2,235 livres extra fees, including 1,000 livres for the *frais de réception*

²⁹³ For a discussion on office values, see William Doyle, 'The price of offices in Pre-Revolutionary France', *The Historical Journal*, 27, 4 (1984), pp. 831-860.

²⁹⁴ This office sold twenty years later for 86,200 livres, which represented an increase of 30%. (Waquet, *Les Grands Maîtres*, 216).

²⁹⁵ ADH, C1255, f.307r., 'Pièce de procédure, 21 sept.1737'.

²⁹⁶ Waquet, *Les Grands Maîtres*, 217.

²⁹⁷ Figure of 1698. Maurice Gresset, *L'introduction de la vénalité des offices en Franche-Comté: 1692-1704* (Paris, 1989), 127.

²⁹⁸ See for example Doyle, 'Colbert et les offices'; id., *Venality*, 210-211.

²⁹⁹ Robert Descimon, 'Les notaires de Paris du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle: Office, Profession, Archives,' in: Michel Cassan, *Offices et officiers "moyens" en France à l'époque moderne. Profession, culture* (Limoges, 2004), pp. 15-42, 25.

alone.³⁰⁰ For offices bought on the open market, the ratio between fees and principal was naturally reduced. When, in 1726, the office of *procureur du roi* was sold for 7,200 livres, the fees represented 5 % of the principal.³⁰¹ For Quillan's office of *maître particulier*, bought by Pierre Marsol in 1734 for 21,000 livres, the *marc d'or*, *sceau* and *honoraires* represented together only 2.4 % of its market price.³⁰²

In our corpus of twenty-eight individuals, office values could be ascertained in seven cases (Table 5). However sparse, these figures yield some important information. Firstly, and predictably, a comparison with the upper end of the hierarchy shows that they were in a completely different league as *grand-maître* offices. In 1695, Guillaume Dunoyer purchased the office of *grand-maître* of Toulouse from Thimoléon Legras for approximately 80,000 livres.³⁰³ In 1763, Charles Louis Paul Anceau sold the same office for 233,800 livres.³⁰⁴ According to Waquet's calculations, on average the value of *grand-maître* offices nearly tripled in one century, from 125,000 livres in 1689 to 351,000 livres in 1785.³⁰⁵ At these upper rungs of the hierarchy, office trading remained to the end a profitable investment.

Table 5 *Quillan maîtrise: Value and origin of some forestry offices (livres)*

Office category	Year Acquired	Value	Origin
Maître particulier	1677	3,000	Parties Casuelles
Maître particulier	1734	21,000	Private sale
Lieutenant	1681	5,400	Private sale
Lieutenant	1686	8,080	Private sale
Procureur du Roi	1675	880	Parties Casuelles
Procureur du Roi	1721	7,200	Private sale
Greffier	1685	1,000	Parties Casuelles

³⁰⁰ Christophe Blanquie, 'Fiscalité et vénalité des offices présidiaux', *Histoire, Économie & Société*, 23, 4 (2004), pp. 473-487, 476.

³⁰¹ AN, V271, 'Lettres de Provisions, (1727)'.

³⁰² AN, V299, 'Lettres de Provisions, (1734)'.

³⁰³ Henri de Coincy, 'Quelques précisions sur les grands-maîtres des Eaux et Forêts en Languedoc', *Annales du Midi*, 35 (1923), pp. 39-57; 184-203; 47.

³⁰⁴ Waquet, *Les Grands Maîtres*, 63.

³⁰⁵ Id., 52.

The data of Table 5 clearly place *maîtrise* offices into a totally different price bracket. In William Beik's list of a sample of Languedoc's elites ranked according to purchase price of office, annual revenue and wealth, the forestry offices would have been found near the bottom, alongside those of the *présidial* courts.³⁰⁶ The table also points to an officially perceived hierarchy within the unit. In the valuations of the *Parties Casuelles*, the office of *maître particulier* (3,000 livres) was worth three times more than that of the *greffier* (1,000 livres). Figures for offices sold on the private market also show the impact of speculation. When Quillan's *maître particulier* office was sold in 1734, its value had increased sevenfold from when it was newly created in 1677,³⁰⁷ the *lieutenant* office gained half of its value within just three years, while the *procureur du roi* office increased ten-fold in forty-six years.

A comparison with forestry offices of other *maîtrises* also highlights the influence of geographical factors on office prices. The original valuation of the Quillan *maître particulier* office is in line with its counterpart of Saint-Gaudens, offered for sale in 1673 at 2,000 livres.³⁰⁸ Both *maîtrises* oversaw richly forested districts, and with a lot of forestry business in perspective, these posts held the promise of substantial perks. By contrast, the newly created office of *maître particulier* in Villeneuve-de-Berg was valued at just 1,000 livres, because of its lack of royal forests.³⁰⁹ In the forest-poor Castelnaudary district, the applicant for *lieutenant* paid the *parties casuelles* in 1676 a mere 400 livres.³¹⁰

This great variability and volatility does not preclude the existence of a stable hierarchy between the different offices. This internal ordering can be approached by way of the *marc d'or*, a staggered tax levied at each office transfer, which represented the combined value of the buyer's expected financial status and the perceived 'dignity' of the office. Nagle's survey of the situation in 1704 shows *marc d'or* rates climbing incrementally along thirty-seven classes, ranging from a mere 42 livres to 5,000 livres.³¹¹ For our corpus, *marc d'or*

³⁰⁶ Beik, *Absolutism*, 53 (Table 3).

³⁰⁷ This steep increase is partly due to inflation and currency depreciation, at least until the stabilisation of 1726.

³⁰⁸ Durand-Barthez, *La Maîtrise particulière des Eaux et Forêts de Comminges*, 141.

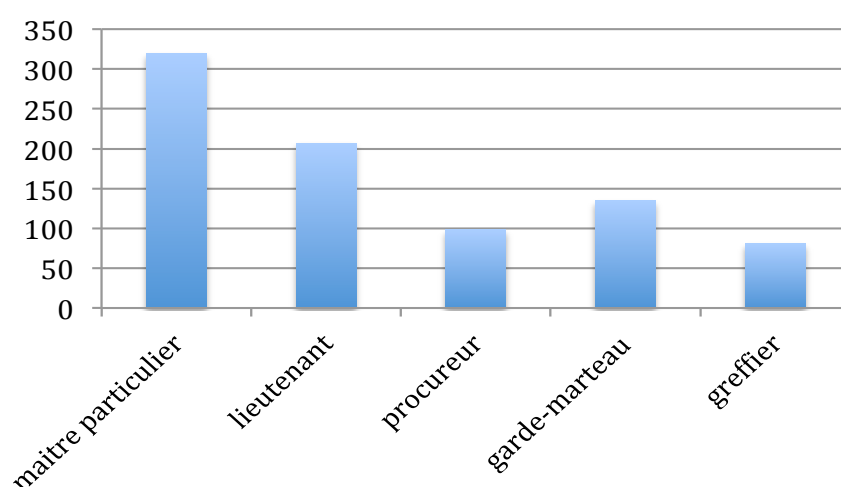
³⁰⁹ ADHG, Table de Marbre, registre 57, f.31r.

³¹⁰ AN, G7, 1364, f.144, 'Quittance de finance de Me Condomines, 28 déc.1676'.

³¹¹ Nagle, *le droit de marc d'or*, 125-126.

rates reproduced the steep gradient between the *grand-maître* and the subaltern officers.³¹² In 1695, Guillaume Dunoyer was charged 1,296 livres, while the average fee paid by a sample of twenty-six *maîtrises* officers of all categories amounted to 208 livres. Even more revealing is the distribution inside the *maîtrise*, where the *maître particulier* clearly towered above the other categories. (Fig. 12)

Fig.12 *Quillan: marc d'or averages paid by maîtrise officers*
 (1684-1734) (livres)
 (Source: AN, VI series)



Rankings based on *marc d'or* are also consistent with those suggested by the *capitation*, a head tax established in January 1695 on the basis of the household's wealth and the 'quality' of the social or professional category.³¹³ Based on a sample of the twenty-two classes of these *capitation* listings,³¹⁴ Table 6 charts the position of several forestry-related categories. Here too, the *grands-mâtres* (8th class) vastly surpassed the *maîtres particuliers* (15th class) and the other forestry officers (16th class), while forest *gardes* were near the bottom of the list.

³¹² AN, V1, 111, 'Provisions d'Offices (1695)'.

³¹³ Bluche et Solnon, *La véritable hiérarchie*, especially 41-61. These authors warned that this official list must be interpreted with care because of the heterogeneous nature of the various classes, and the political agenda that guided their elaboration.

³¹⁴ Boislisle, *Correspondance*, vol.1, 565-574.

Table 6 *Capitation rates for a selection of social and professional groups*
(Source: Boislisle: Correspondance)

Class	Capitation tariff (livres)	Social and professional groups
1	2000	contrôleur général des finances
2	1500	premier président du Parlement de Paris
3	1000	premiers présidents des Parlements de province
4	500	
5	400	maîtres des requêtes du Parlement de Paris
6	300	présidents a mortier des Parlements de province
7	250	receveurs du domaine
8	200	grand-maître des Eaux et Forêts ; lieutenant général de la Table de marbre; greffier en chef du bureau des finances de Paris
9	150	maîtres des chambres des comptes des provinces
10	120	gentilshommes seigneurs des paroisses; notaires et secrétaires des cours supérieures de Paris; banquiers et agents de change;
11	100	lieutenants généraux, particuliers et criminels, procureurs du Roy et greffiers en chef des bailliages et sénéchaussées ressortissant au Parlement; maires des villes où il y a Parlement; marchands faisant commerce en gros; vendeurs de marée; maître particulier des Eaux et Forêts de Paris
12	80	avocats des présidiaux de province; élus et greffiers de l'élection de Paris
13	60	maires des villes de second ordre; receveurs généraux des gabelles
14	50	capitaines des chasses
15	40	greffiers des présidiaux; bourgeois des villes du second ordre vivant de leurs rentes; fermiers des terres et biens dont les baux excèdent 3000 livres; maîtres particuliers des Eaux et Forêts (hors Paris)
16	30	professeurs en droit; officiers des bailliages royaux, des élections, greniers a sel; officiers des Eaux et Forêts , conestablie, amirautés, juges des traites; maires des petites villes; marchands de blé, vin et bois; officiers des Tables de marbre
17	20	notaires des villes où il y a parlement; avocats des cours supérieures; procureurs des parlements, cours supérieures et requestes du Palais
18	10	notaires des villes de second ordre
19	6	notaires des petites villes vivant de leurs rentes; gardes-chasse
20	3	avocats et procureurs des présidiaux; arpenteurs des eaux et forêts ; notaires et praticiens des bourgs et villages; sergents-gardes des eaux et forests

Overall, these preliminary observations confirm that the early modern forestry apparatus was constructed along a stable hierarchical model, including the dominance of seats located near the capital: in official minds, the pyramidal structure of the *Eaux-et-Forêts* seemed immutably established. Examining them now in terms of the incomes they provided can further refine this general image of the forestry office.

A century of mediocre gages

In the venal system, forestry offices belonged to the category of *offices à gages*. Contrary to purchase prices, the sources are more prolific about *gages* and other types of financial rewards attached to the forestry office. An overview can be found in the records compiled under Froidour by the treasurer of the *Grande Maîtrise* in Toulouse who oversaw the distribution of *gages* to the various categories of personnel³¹⁵: *grand-maître*, officers of the *Table de Marbre*, officers of all *maîtrises particulières* and *grueries*, and *gardes*.³¹⁶ The treasurer's accounts show that the receipts from wood sales in the *Grande Maîtrise* supported these personnel costs. The year 1679 can serve as an example (Table 7). In the *Grande Maîtrise*, personnel costs represented one-third of the sales receipts, with the *grand-maître* and his secretary, predictably, receiving the lion's share, while the *gages* of the officers amounted to comparatively modest sums.

Table 7 *Gages of the different personnel categories*
in the Grande Maîtrise of Toulouse (1679) (livres) (Source: AN, G7, 297)

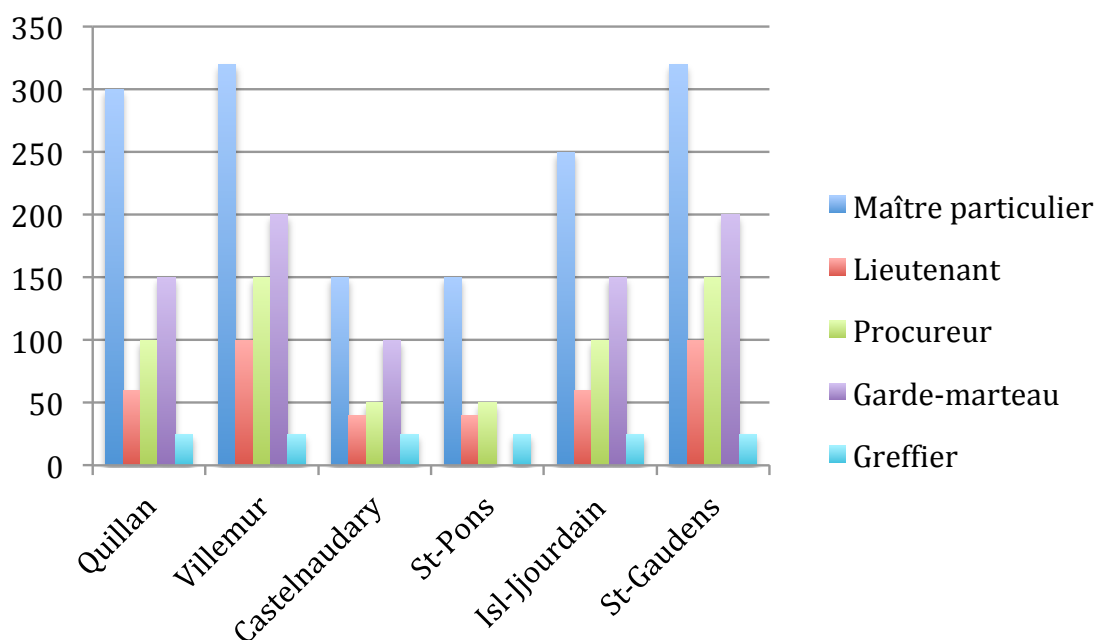
CATEGORY OF FORESTRY PERSONNEL	GAGES
Grand-Maître	6,000
Secrétaire du grand-maître	1,200
Lieutenant général (Table de Marbre)	400
Procureur du roi (Table de Marbre)	300
Greffier (Table de Marbre)	100
Maîtres Particuliers	1,536
Lieutenants	400
Procureurs du Roi	629
Garde-marteaux	800
Greffiers	150
Gardes	1,816
Total Expense for forestry personnel	13,331
	Total Receipt from wood sales (1679)
	41,192

³¹⁵ Under Colbert it was a commissioned post, which from 1687 onwards was turned into the office of *receveur général des domaines et bois*)

³¹⁶ AN, G7, 297, f.iii, 'Comptes du Sr. Riquier pour les bois du Languedoc (1687)'.

Focusing now specifically on the *gages* of *maîtrise* officers, their quantitative analysis reveals a number of characteristics. A comparison between six of Colbert's reconfigured subdistricts in the *Grande Maîtrise* of Toulouse shows that they varied in accordance to the perceived prestige of the *maîtrise* and the perspective of extra earnings (Fig. 13). As the *maîtrise* that oversaw the forests supplying the regional capital Toulouse, Villemur was regarded as particularly prestigious, and the mountain *maîtrises* of Quillan and Saint-Gaudens controlled densely forested districts.

Fig.13 Gages of maîtrise officers in six districts of the Grande Maîtrise of Toulouse (1683) (livres)
(Source: AN, G7, 297)

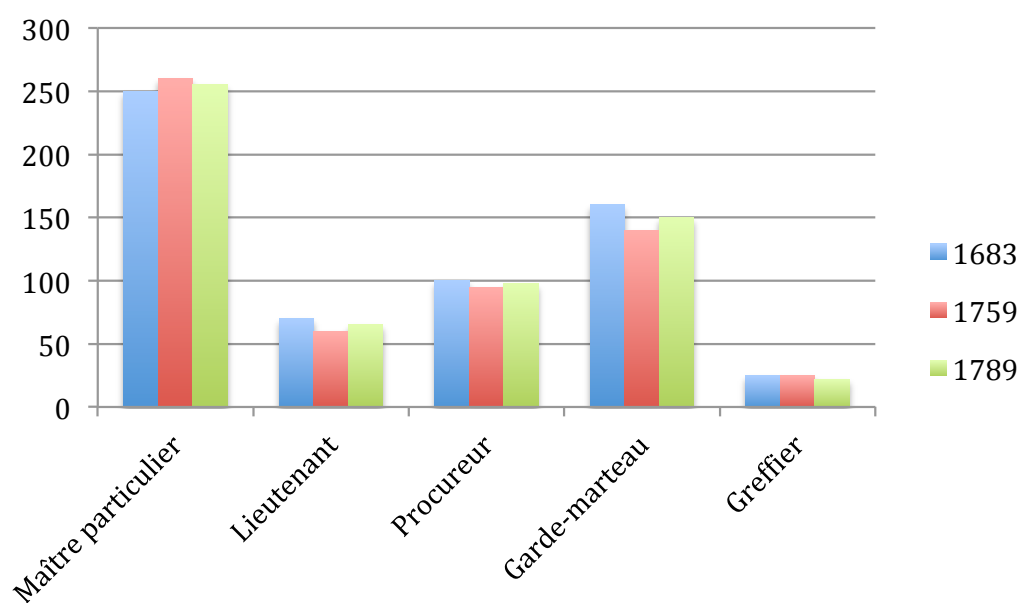


Regardless of these variations, the relative distribution between the five categories of officers was consistent, paralleling that of the *marc d'or* shown in Fig. 12. *Maîtres particuliers* received more than double of the average *gages* of the other categories. *Lieutenants* and *greffiers* always received the lowest incomes. Already in 1573, *lieutenants* had earned four times less than *maîtres particuliers*, a longstanding disparity, which contributed to their uneasy position within the *maîtrise* and their frequent conflicts with the heads. With 25 livres p.a., *greffiers* earned even less than the notoriously underpaid *gardes*

(30 livres p.a. on average). With his *gages* consistently higher than those of the *procureur du roi*, the *garde-marteau* presented an intriguing anomaly, possibly linked to the historic prestige associated with this function.

In terms of longterm evolution, a comparison of the figures for 1683, 1759 and 1789 shows that *gages*, averaged across the *Grande Maîtrise*, remained broadly unchanged for during the whole century (Fig. 14).³¹⁷ Moreover, official accounts show that they were not always paid in full, and not always on time.

*Fig.14 Averages of the gages of maîtrise officers
in the Grande Maîtrise of Toulouse
(1683, 1759, 1789) (livres)
(Sources: AN, G7, 297; AN, P2994)*



If we consider the additional income generated by the acquisition of an ‘*alternatif*’ office or an ‘*augmentation de gages*’,³¹⁸ the income data show some increase towards the end of the century. This trend, which is particularly prominent for the *maîtres particuliers*, is represented in Fig. 15.

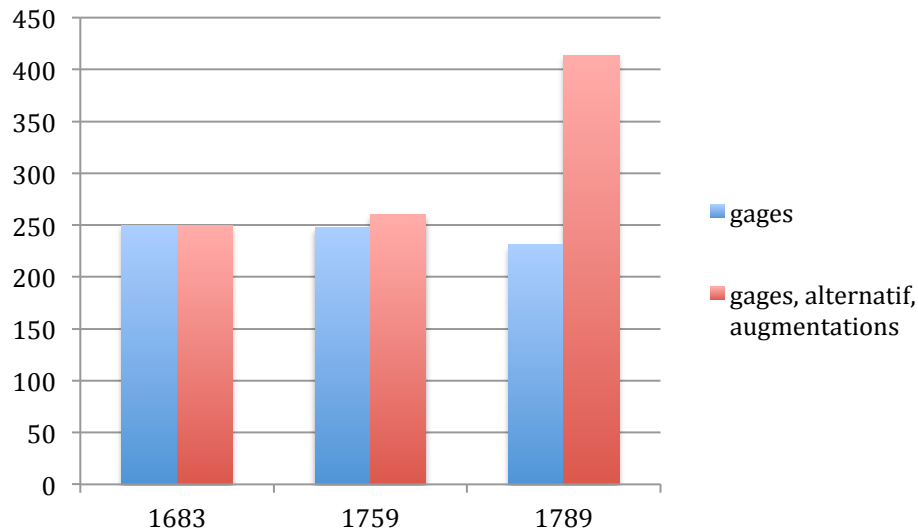
³¹⁷ Sources: 1683: AN, G7, 297; 1759 and 1789: AN, P2994. Figures for 1683 and 1759 are based on 6 *maîtrises* (Quillan, Villemur Castelnaudary, Saint Pons, Isle-Jourdain and Saint-Gaudens); for 1789 on 3 *maîtrises* (Quillan, Villemur and Castelnaudary).

³¹⁸ They will be discussed more amply below, p.125-6.

Fig.15 *Maîtres Particuliers in the Grande Maîtrise of Toulouse:*

The impact of ‘augmentations de gages’ and ‘alternatif’

(Sources: AN, G7, 297; AN, P2994)



Next to *gages*, additional incomes such as ‘*alternatif*’ and ‘*augmentations*’ were important elements in the financial strategies of the officers, but on which the officers had little leverage. As a proportion of the capital he invested in the office, the *gages* of the *maître particulier* office in Quillan represented 10 % in 1677. This proportion decreased steeply to 1.4 % in 1734, due to the inflated price of the office on the open market. Including *alternatif* and *augmentations* in this calculation increases the percentage for 1734 only slightly, to 1.81 %. These percentages are in the same order of magnitude as other intermediate offices, such as *élus* (less than 2 % in 1789) or *bailliages* and *sénéchaussées* officers (3 %).³¹⁹ At any rate, they were well below the official benchmark of 5 % to be had on the loans they might have been forced to take enter these schemes. Altogether then, and regardless of internal differences between the different categories, the income package represented by *gages*, *alternatif* and *augmentations* would have been insufficient to keep up with inflation and maintain a lifestyle suitable for members of urban elites. The picture changes, however, when considering another income-enhancing source, the *journées et vacations*.

³¹⁹ Doyle, *Venality*, 199.

Journées, a crucial part of the income package

Forestry authorities were well aware of the need to enhance officers' *gages* through other financial incentives, as well as more symbolic prerogatives, as a bulwark against the temptation of professional negligence and fraud. As Froidour argued, "pour exciter lesl. officiers [...] a estre plus diligens et affectionnés a fidellement servir et se bien comporter en leurs charges sans rien recéler pour les mettre à couvert de l'opression qui pouroit leur estre suscitée par ceux qu'ils auront condamnés [...] et leur donner moyen de vivre sans commettre aucune concussion, S.M. est très humblement suppliée de vouloir les maintenir dans les privilèges en la possession desquels nous avons trouvé qu'ils ont esté maintenus par arrest du parlement."³²⁰ As will be seen in chapter four, these coveted rights were also a frequent source of abuse, and the acrimonious suits which arose to protect them show that for the individual officer, their importance cannot be overestimated.

The most important of these supplements were the *journées et vacations*. In principle, these payments compensated for expenses incurred in the performance of their duties, for example attendance at wood auctions, forest inspections, or assisting sales events for royal and non-royal forests. They were paid through the *sol pour livre*, an official 5% fee levied directly on the merchants during the auction. The centrally determined rate of a forestry *journée* ranged from 3 livres/day for *greffiers* to 6 livres/day for *maîtres particuliers*. Crucially, this extra payment could represent a substantial increase of income for the officers. With his *journées*, *garde-marteau* Antoine Cachulet increased his *gages* by 60 %.

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The example of the *maîtres particuliers* in the Toulouse *Grande Maîtrise* (Fig. 6)³²² not only demonstrates how much *journées* could boost their income. These extras also represented the part of their income package on which they could have some influence. The multiplication of the number of *journées* is especially visible after mid-century. In 1685, a *maître particulier* claimed an average of 9 days, at a rate of 6 livres/day (making just 54 livres), but in 1789 his successor requested 78 *journées* at a daily rate of 9 livres, which returned over 700 livres. It is unlikely that this thirteen-fold increase over one

³²⁰ ADHG, A12, t.2, f.141v., 'Procès-Verbal de la Réformation Générale de la maîtrise de Toulouse (Villemur)'.

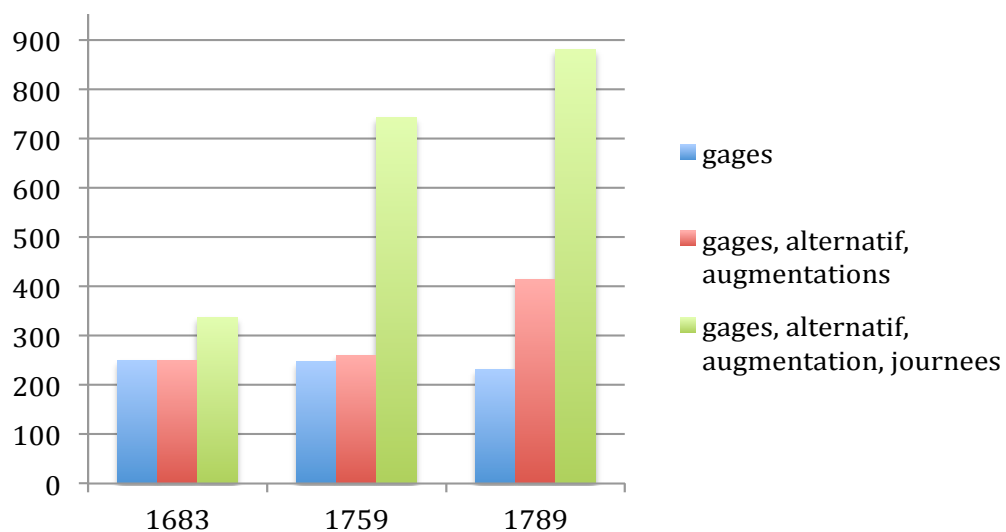
³²¹ ADH, 1BP32105, 'Gages des officiers, Quillan, (1701)'.

³²² Based on averages of three *maîtrises*: Villemur, Castelnaudary, Quillan.

hundred years was justified by an equivalent increase of the workload for the same office. With this maneuver, the officers compensated for what they presumably perceived as an inadequate reward for their work. It was conspicuous enough to be included as a key argument in Calonne and Lamoignon's attempts at reforming the *Eaux-et-Forêts* in 1788.

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*Fig.16 Maîtres particuliers in the Grande Maîtrise of Toulouse:
The impact of 'journées' on their income (1683, 1759, 1789)
(Sources: AN, G7, 297; AN, P2994)*



As a river port, Quillan also provided the officers with another means of securing extra income. It can be assumed that many river port *maîtrises* would have had similar arrangements. Officers received a jealously guarded *droit de passe* for their duties of control of the timber rafts conveyed down the Aude. With a yearly average of 350 livres from this fee, the *maître particulier* could thus double his *gages*. This fee was allocated according to a precise set of rates, depending on the office category and the nature of the timber load. In Quillan, the lack of regular controls of this important aspect of personnel costs resulted in substantial fraud, as the *procureur de Réformation* discovered on his audit

³²³ See the riposte sent to the deputies of the *Etats Généraux* by Dufort, *procureur du roi* at the *maîtrise* of Guyenne, *Discours du procureur du roi de la maîtrise particulière des Eaux et Forêts de Guienne*,... (Bordeaux?, March 1789), 30-32.

of the *maîtrise*'s accounts. When the legal justification to receive the *droit de passe* was challenged, is not surprising that the officers fought a desperate legal battle to keep it.³²⁴

Further to these various financial benefits, officers also received firewood allowances proportionally to the status of their office. They were usually provided in cash, but in Quillan where wood could be conveniently floated down right to the officers' doors, they were delivered in kind, one *pile* for every one-hundred passing through the port to be shared among them according to a given quota.³²⁵ Furthermore, an *arrêt du Conseil* of 1708 protected the officers against *taille* increase. Two years later another *arrêt* exempted them from the *dixième*, and that of June 1715 shielded their *journées* and *chauffages* against the risk of being seized as security by personal creditors, treasurers or *traitants*.

In sum, while *gages* alone would have been a poor financial basis for these officers, additional allocations such as *journées*, *droits de passe* or firewood allowances offer a less bleak, and more realistic, picture of the foresters' income situation. In Quillan, the office of *maître particulier* carried 300 livres *gages* p.a., but, in reality, the officer could count on at least 700 livres p.a. in 1683, and well over 1,000 livres in 1789. The authorities had a prime interest in helping intermediate foresters to maintain levels of income suiting their status as royal officers, keep sufficient local 'credit', and remain fiscally sound. For all those benefits however, what governments gave with one hand, they took again with the other. The forestry office was not exempt of the *taille*, to which after 1695 was added the *capitation*. Furthermore, speculating on the credit that these officers could command locally, governments sporadically imposed different forms of forced loans. For historians like William Doyle who explored the relationships of venality and the fiscal-financial state, these requests imposed upon office holders were, especially under Louis XIV, a more effective and cheaper option than other forms of raising income for the treasury, such as *rentes*, taxes or monetary manipulations.³²⁶

Forced loans

With the *augmentations de gages*, office-holders were requested to invest a certain sum in order to continue receiving their *gages*. The *rachat du prêt et annuel* further allowed

³²⁴ ADH, C1256, pièces 117-158. This right was confirmed by the new *règlement* of 1754.

³²⁵ ADAD, 63C3, f.85r., 'Registre pour l'insinuation des édits, arrêts et règlements, maîtrise de Quillan (17 fév.1674)'.

³²⁶ Doyle, *Venality*, 52-3.

officers or their successors to continue enjoying hereditary transmission and keep the office as part of the family patrimony. These operations required them to mobilise funds from trusted circles of creditors, raising their personal debt levels and making them even more dependent on the regular income from *gages* and extras. In forestry, between 1671 and 1745 mid-ranking officers were solicited three times in that way. Soon after the surge of office sales of 1689, the edict of August 1693 requested from them a first, hereditary, *augmentation de gages*, at an initial interest rate of 10 %. In five *maîtrises* of the *Grande Maîtrise* of Guyenne, ³²⁷ *maîtres particuliers* were asked for 1,127 livres, *garde-marteaux* 732 livres, and *procureurs du roi* 415 livres. ³²⁸ In 1716, the initial rate became reduced to 4%, then to 2% in 1720, and finally 1% in 1726.

Just eight years later, the edict of December 1701 forced a substantial *augmentation* on all judicial offices. After serious *parlementaire* protest, ³²⁹ it was moderated by the *Déclaration* of 14 February 1702. Regarding forestry offices, a close examination of the negotiations around that particular intervention of 1701 shows that a compromise figure was reached after almost a year of haggling between central demands and requests for moderation, requiring sometimes the intervention of the region's *intendant*. ³³⁰ With their foresters too, monarchical governments had to use caution, taking care not to pass the insolvency threshold of the individual officer. Interest on this new loan was initially fixed at 7.14%. *Grand-maître* Claude Anceau paid 16,000 livres to receive 1,142 livres *augmentations*, which represented an increase of 23 % on his regular income. For the *maîtres particuliers* of Villemur and Quillan, who paid respectively 3,080 and 2,100 livres into the scheme, the increase was even more substantial (31% and 50 %) - at least initially. ³³¹ It is unclear how long these loans remained at the more attractive initial rate, but data of 1759 suggest that by that date it had plummeted to 0.85 %. ³³²

In February 1745, with war costs spiralling again, the government turned again to the forestry officers with a particularly substantial demand. They asked for payment to keep their *préséance* rights, and their share of the statutory 14 deniers/livre paid by merchants at

³²⁷ Isle-Jourdain, Saint-Gaudens, Villemur, Castelnaudary, Mazamet.

³²⁸ AN, P3924, 'Quittances de Finances d'Offices'. The figures are averages.

³²⁹ John Hurt, *Louis XIV and the Parlements. The assertion of royal authority* (Manchester, 2002), 95-6.

³³⁰ AN, G7, 1364, f.41v.-47r., 'Etat des sommes à payer pour les officiers des maîtrises pour taxations et augmentations de gages attribués par l'édit de décembre 1701'.

³³¹ AN, G7, 1364, f.56, 'Augmentations de gages payés par les officiers des maîtrises (Quillan), 8.mai 1708'.

³³² AN, P2994, 'Recettes et Dépenses', Toulouse (1759).

each sales transaction to cover their *journées*.³³³ Records show that nearly all officers of the Toulouse *maîtrise* obliged within two years, causing an abrupt rise of indebtedness amongst this category of office-holders. To cover this payment, the *maître particulier* of Villemur, François de Domingon Cambesian, had to borrow from two merchants of Montauban “à constitution de rente”, at the usual rate of 5%.³³⁴ The 2,692 livres paid by his counterpart of Quillan, Pierre Marsol, represented nearly 13 % of the price of the office he had bought just one decade before, no doubt a heavy additional burden on his personal budget.³³⁵

For all the consideration and personal ‘credit’ it offered, the acquisition of a forestry office, then, also carried financial risks. This begs the question of evaluating the long-term rate of return on the initial investment for a mid-ranking forestry office, a calculation that all office-holders must have contemplated at some point.

Maître particulier, an unprofitable office

For the seventeenth century, historians have estimated that royal offices seldom offered significant long-term returns on the invested capital, especially if compared with high-yield rents on land and buildings, and other profitable forms of economic activities. For that period, returns were evaluated in general at between 1 and 4.5 %.³³⁶ By the end of the eighteenth century, with intensifying speculation, yields would have been fluctuating, but for most middling to lower judicial offices they remained under the 5 % threshold.³³⁷ In his detailed analysis of the financial situation of a wealthy bourgeois of Nantes who had acquired in 1746 the office of *maître de la chambre des comptes*, Jean Meyer reached a similar conclusion. The overall profit on the capital he had invested over thirty years had been minimal. For Meyer, it had been “une opération blanche, qui ne vaut [...] qu’en fonction du prestige social ainsi acquis.”³³⁸ For the prestigious office of *grand-maître* of

³³³ ‘Edit du roi février 1745 qui ordonne que les Grands-Maîtres des Eaux & Forêts feront tenus au rachat de l’annuel, & les Officiers des Eaux & Forêts à celui du prêt & de l’annuel’, in: Bonaventure Chailland, *Dictionnaire raisonné des Eaux et Forêts* (Paris, 1769), vol.1, t.2, 286.

³³⁴ AN, P3411, ‘Taxations aux officiers des maîtrises des Eaux et Forêts, édit de février 1745. (19 sept. 1746)’.

³³⁵ Id., (22 fév. 1747).

³³⁶ Donna Bohanan, ‘The sword as the robe in seventeenth-century Provence and Brittany’, in: Mack Holt, *Society and institutions in early modern France* (Athens, London, 1991), pp. 51-62, 53.

³³⁷ Doyle, *Venality*, 200.

³³⁸ Jean Meyer, ‘L’évolution de la vénalité des offices au XVIII^e siècle’, in: Pinet, *Histoire de la fonction publique*, vol.2, pp. 353-367.

Toulouse, Henri de Coincy obtained a performance of 6 % for the period 1743 to 1763.³³⁹ This figure, though higher than that of the *maître des comptes*, still hovered just one percent above the regular interest rate on loans of 5 %. In any case, these rates were well below those of office-holders in finance who, in Doyle's words, were the "greatest profiteers in the venal system."³⁴⁰

Data availability allows us to attempt this calculation for the *maître particulier* office in Quillan. The return on the total capital invested, over a certain period, to acquire, maintain and transmit this office will be offset against the accrued yearly income from that office over the same period. The results are summarised in Tables 9 and 10 below. The chosen time bracket (1677 to 1744) totals sixty-seven years. Inevitably, the variables used for this calculation include some estimates, and a few preliminary explanations beforehand are therefore necessary.

In order to reflect the fact that the profitability of the office changed with each major financial 'event', I have subdivided the period into five distinct sub-periods, determined by the occurrence of a major change concerning the office: 1677 (first acquisition from *parties casuelles*) to 1695; 1696 (first office transfer) to 1704; 1705 (acquisition of *alternatif*) to 1726; 1727 (second office transfer) to 1733; 1734 (private sale of office) to 1744 (just before the next major forced loan).

On the 'expenses' side comes, firstly, the capital value of the office. It had been acquired in 1677 from the *parties casuelles* for 3,000 livres. Afterwards, it was handed down within the same family until it was sold on the private market in 1734 for 21,000 livres. To reflect the evolution of its market price in-between these extremes (which are the only two secure values available), I have assumed a linear progression along a gliding scale between 3,000 and 21,000 livres.³⁴¹ Secondly, the office changed hands three times, incurring transfer fees (*marc d'or, sceau, honoraires*) in 1696, 1727 and 1734, based on indications of the *lettres de provision*. As those of the 1696 transfer were missing, I have used data of 1688 for the *maître particulier* office of Saint-Gaudens, a *maîtrise* similar to Quillan.³⁴² Its fees amounted to 505 livres, which is also the amount paid at the office transfer in Quillan in

³³⁹ Coincy, 'Quelques précisions', vol.2, 190.

³⁴⁰ Doyle, *Venality*, 205.

³⁴¹ Because of the fluctuations on the office markets, this is of course a simple approximation, but given the limited data, it is the best possible one.

³⁴² AN, V51, 'Lettres de Provisions (1688)'.

1727. This figure is exclusive of any additional costs, *pots-de-vin* or gifts, for which no information was available. Thirdly, there are two *augmentation de gages* to consider. For the first *augmentation* in 1693, I have again used the figure for Saint-Gaudens, whose *maître particulier* paid 1,400 livres to receive an additional 100 livres *gages*, giving an interest of 7.14 %. The *augmentation* of 1702 is known for Quillan. It amounts to 3,080 livres. Furthermore, at some point between 1702 and 1710, Quillan's *maître particulier* also acquired the *alternatif* office for 1,000 livres. Finally, the *annuel* which secured the hereditary transmission of the office was taken as 1/60th of the original valuation of 3,000 livres, adding a further payment of 50 livres p.a.

On the 'income' side, *gages* levels remained at 300 livres p.a. unchanged throughout the whole period. Secondly, for the two *augmentations* of 1693 and 1702, it is known that the initial interest rates diminished over time. For the 1693 operation, I have used the progressive interest devaluation described above, from the original 7.14 % to 1 % after 1726. Similarly, for the 1702 *augmentation*, the interest would not have stayed long at 7.14 %, and I have assumed a value of 3 % after 1710, based on known interest decreases from later periods. Thirdly, we have seen that the number of claimed *journées et vacations* increased during the period. From the sales records of the whole period, I have assumed an average of 15 *journées* at 6 livres/day, or 90 livres/year. Finally, based on yearly figures for 1720 to 1740,³⁴³ the additional payments received for the 5 *deniers/livre* and the *droits de passe* have been evaluated at an average of 400 livres p.a.

Tables 8 and 9 provide a summary of the calculations used to obtain an estimate of the profitability of Quillan's *maître particulier* office and its evolution over time. It has been calculated separately for each of the five sub-periods.

³⁴³ ADH, C1256, 'Etat des recettes et dépenses du produit des bois... (1720-1740)'.

Table 8 Summary of the variables used in the profit calculation for the
maître particulier office of Quillan (1677-1744)

EXPENSES	(livres)
Market prices (estimated)	(1677): 3,000; (1687): 6,000; (1697): 9,000; (1707): 12,000; (1717): 15,000; (1727): 18,000; (1737): 21,000
Fees for 2 office transfers (<i>marc d'or, sceau, honoraires</i>)	505 each transfer
<i>Augmentation gages</i> (1693)	1,400
<i>Augmentation gages</i> (1702)	3,080
<i>Alternatif</i> (ca. 1705)	1,000
<i>Annuel</i>	50/yr
INCOME	(livres)
<i>Gages</i>	300/yr
<i>Augmentations de gages</i> (1693)	(1696-1715): 7.14 % = 100/yr (1716-1719): 4 % = 56/yr (1720-1725): 2 % = 28/yr (1726-1759): 1 % = 14/yr
<i>Augmentations de gages</i> (1702)	(1702-1710): 7.14% = 220/yr (1710-1733): 3 % = 92/yr
<i>Journées et vacations</i>	90/yr
Extra income (5 deniers/livre, <i>droits de passe</i>)	400/yr

*Table 9 Returns (%) on the accrued capital invested
in a maître particulier office (Quillan) (1677-1744)*

SUB-PERIOD	TOTAL EXPENSES (livres)	TOTAL INCOME (livres)	RETURN (%) (b) / (a)
PERIOD I 1677 – 1695 (18 yrs)	6,000 (purchase price, averaged over 18 years); 505 (transfer fees); 500 (annuel)	5,400 (gages) + 200 (augm.1693) + 1,620 (journées) + 7,200 (droits de passe)	
	expenses for first period = 7,005 (a)	income for period I = 14,420, makes 801/year (b)	11.43 %
PERIOD II 1696 – 1704 (8 yrs)	4,500 (added capital) + 505 (transfer fees) + 1,400 (augm.1693) + 3,080 (augm.1702) + 400 (annuel)	2,400 (gages) + 800 (augm.1693) + 440 (augm. 1702) + 720 (journées) + 3,200 (droits passe)	
	accrued expenses for period = 16,890	income for period II = 7,560, makes 945/year	5.59 %
PERIOD III 1705 – 1726 (21 yrs)	10,500 (added capital) + 1,000 (alternatif) + 1,050 (annuel)	6,300 (gages) + 1,322 (augm.1693) + 2,572 (augm.1702) + 1,890 (journées) + 8,400 (droits passe)	
	accrued expenses = 29,440	income for period III = 20,484, makes 975/year	3.31 %
PERIOD IV 1727 – 1733 (6 yrs)	9,000 (added capital) + 505 (transfer fees) + 300 (annuel)	1,800 (gages) + 84 (augm.1693) + 552 (augm.1702) + 540 (journées) + 2,400 (droits passe)	
	accrued expenses = 39,245	income for period IV = 5,376, makes 896/year	2.28 %
PERIOD V 1734 – 1744 (10 yrs)	2,500 (added capital); 505 (transfer fees); 500 (annuel)	3,000 (gages) + 140 (augm.1693) + 310 (augm.1702 at 1%) + 900 (journées) + 4,000 (droits de passe)	
	accrued expenses = 42,750	income for period V = 8,350, makes 835/year	1.95 %

These calculations yield a number of results. Firstly, and predictably, for period I the return at 11.43 % is relatively high, because of the low initial investment and the substantial *droits de passe*. This high profitability did not last. From period II to V, the returns on the invested capital decreased rapidly, from 5.59 % to just 1.95 %. This is mainly due to the influence of the steadily rising market value of the office and the *augmentations*, which were not counterbalanced by corresponding income increases. Furthermore, if we also take inflation into account, and most of all, debt repayments at 5 %, it becomes clear that over this long period, the office would have been losing value to the point of negative equity, unless compensated by external, non-office related income sources. These results broadly correspond to the prevailing opinion that the early modern office was a “placement qui rapporte peu, expose son détenteur aux exactions du fisc et ne peut jamais garantir le recouvrement du capital.”³⁴⁴ In the long run, the office of *maître particulier* was an investment ‘at a loss’. Mid-ranking forestry offices were “intended only for those who already had other means which the crown wished to tap.”³⁴⁵

The diminishing profitability of this office raises the question of why it remained in the same family for so long. Next to the professional stability it offered, historians have often advanced motives of prestige, personal ‘credit’, and respectability. In a less ‘glamorous’ vein, it is also likely that declining market values later in the century made them unsellable. The case of the mid-ranking forestry office provides another, even bleaker possibility. Within the wide range of judicial offices, forestry was not only unprofitable and unglamorous; it was also a specialism, which much reduced the prospects of moving upwards or sideways into other areas. On the other hand, the next section will show that, for all its negative characteristics, the forestry office did not preclude a level of wealth that allowed these families to maintain their position as part of the small-town bourgeoisie. The office was one component of a range of strategies, which, crucially, included the strengthening of bonds with the most successful local wood merchants. Analysis of the wealth strategies of Quillan’s officers will shed more light on these strategies, uncovering in the process the unexpected outcome of a reversal of the traditional hierarchical superiority of the *maître particulier* over subaltern officers.

³⁴⁴ Arlette Lebigre, *La justice du roi* (Paris, 1988), 67.

³⁴⁵ Doyle, *Venality*, 201.

The wealth of forestry officers

Middling wealth levels

The generally comfortable, even prosperous situation of Quillan's officers that emerges from examining the officers' wealth portfolio from the 1670s to the 1740s stands in stark contrast to the morose image described above, which only considered their incomes from the office. Overall, their economic situation is comparable to that of notable local wood merchants such as the Alvernys, whose estate was detailed in a sales deal after one of them suffered personal ruin in 1699.³⁴⁶ Information found in notarial and other records shows officers owning town houses, farms, fields, gardens, and vineyards, a lucrative production that was developing fast in the low hills around Quillan and Limoux. By 1789, all last holders of a *maîtrise* office, or at least one of their close relatives, tellingly, had the name of a *seigneurie* added to their title.³⁴⁷ Behind this impression of relative prosperity lies the typical range of strategies used by the urban bourgeoisie to acquire, maintain and enhance their status. Forestry officers diversified their assets, engaged in financial transactions or real estate operations, whilst securing their situation further through judicious matrimonial alliances and strategic networking.

By combining a variety of sources, we can first try to evaluate, in quantitative terms, the general wealth bracket of these provincial forestry officers. Here again, *capitation* rates can be a useful guide. In his study of small towns, F.J. Ruggiu estimated the ratio of *capitation* to the yearly income of middling officers at 0.8 to 1 %.³⁴⁸ Applying this index to the *capitation* data appearing in Table 6 places the wealth bracket of Quillan's *maître particulier* in the region of 2,400 to 4,000 livres. This figure compares well with an example from another forest-rich province, Burgundy, where the personal accounts of the *procureur du roi* of the *maîtrise particulière* of Autun, Louis-Marie Fourat, have provided us with a rare source of detail information. With an annual surplus fluctuating between 1,500 et 5,000 livres, *procureur* Fourat was considered "un homme aisé, très au-dessus de

³⁴⁶ ADAD, 3E7749, f.31v., 'Registre Notaire Me Siau, acte du 27 mars 1699'.

³⁴⁷ Examination of notarial records for a later period could ascertain whether their *seigneurie* was acquired through marriage or direct purchase.

³⁴⁸ François-Joseph Ruggiu, *Les élites et les villes moyennes*, 176. The figures refer to Abbeville and Alençon after 1766.

la moyenne des gens de son entourage quotidien.”³⁴⁹ The proceeds from his office represented 27 % of his annual budget. The remainder was spread between 47% from vineyards, 10 % from land and building lease, and 13 % from diverse financial investments. While we clearly have to allow for regional differences, this example points to the importance of analysing in greater detail the strategies used by forestry officers to build their family fortunes.

Winning strategies

By including different career moves within the officer’s lifetime, and expanding the analysis to the wider familial sphere, the forestry office emerges as one component in an integrated strategy, which was largely based on what G.V. Taylor termed ‘proprietary’ wealth, i.e. land, venal office and annuities.³⁵⁰ In the case of Quillan, the strong interlinkage between wood merchants and officers allowed to combine entrepreneurial spirit and shrewd political sense with the more careful risk management approach of traditional ‘proprietary wealth’ strategies. The success of this integrated approach is reflected in the relatively large number of *seigneurie*-owning descendants of both, officers and merchants, in the second half of the century.

Quillan’s *procureur du roi* and *lieutenant* are an excellent illustration of this strategy. The wealth and local influence enjoyed by Quillan’s *procureur du Roy* Pierre Pinet was based on the returns from his *seigneurie* of Brezilhou,³⁵¹ further secured by close familial links with the Pinets, one of the town’s most successful wood merchant families. Acquiring the office of *procureur*, a key post in the *maîtrise*, was part of a wider familial strategy combining wood trade and forestry office. When Pierre Pinet left the *maîtrise* after twenty-six years in forestry to become *châtelain* of Quillan for the archbishop of Narbonne, he managed a substantial estate comprising several houses, vineyards, fields, *herms*, meadows, gardens and woods. In 1731, together with his brother François, he invested 6,000 livres in bonds emitted by the *Etats* of Languedoc,³⁵² evidence that his portfolio also included important liquidities.

³⁴⁹ M. Dorigny, *De forêts en vignes : journal d'un notable de l'Autunois, Louis Marie Fourat, 1774-1807* (Dijon, 1997), 23.

³⁵⁰ George V. Taylor, ‘Non-capitalist wealth and the origins of the French revolution’, *The American Historical Review*, 72, 2 (1967), pp. 469-496.

³⁵¹ Brezilhou is located two kilometres north of Quillan.

³⁵² ADAD, 3E13294, ‘Registre Notaire M.Roillet, acte du 19 juillet 1731’.

The fortunes of the Jauberts, *lieutenants* of the *maîtrise*, rested on the wealth accumulated by their most prominent member, Guillaume Jaubert, the town's longstanding judge. In 1681, Guillaume Jaubert bought the office of *lieutenant* from the seriously indebted Jean Besset de Garard, who had been prosecuted and heavily fined for charges of fraud, embezzlement, and abuse of office. A court settlement of 1686 requested that the office be sold back to the Besset family, who kept it until 1724, after which it returned to the Jauberts until the Revolution. Guillaume Jaubert's marriage into the Delbès family in 1685 brought him a dowry of 4,400 livres, as well as a connection with the religious elite of Carcassonne, where the bride's uncle was *chanoine* of the cathedral. His uncle, Jacques Jaubert, was a particularly active wood merchant who had married into the Négrés, an old noble family. Outside wood commerce, Jacques Jaubert exploited the whole gamut of profitable operations, including money lending, real estate operations, and the leasing of cattle and sheep (*gazaille*). When Guillaume Jaubert's son, Jean-Louis, assumed the *lieutenant* office in 1724, he was already heir to a substantial estate in and around Quillan, including a flourmill, at least one town house, one *métairie*, and some vineyards.

A crucial factor in the fortunes of officers like the Pinets or Jauberts was their close association with local wood merchant circles, a strategy that also applied to other officers. The wealth of the family of Jean Roillet, the *maîtrise*'s longstanding *greffier*, rested on a fruitful alliance of forestry office, notarial activity, and wood trade. In 1733, Jean Roillet financed a two-man wood trade company, one of whose partners was his own son, Jean-Pierre, known for switching roles between notarial and commercial activities despite official prohibition.³⁵³ The risk of collusion and fraud, which this close connection between legal and commercial activities entailed, was long known to the legislators. It is a key aspect of this study, and will be developed more fully in chapter four. Further evidence for the continuing connection between forestry officers and wood traders can be found in the lists of delegates to the Languedoc *Etats*.³⁵⁴ Out of 102 delegates from the *diocèse* Alet et Limoux between 1661 and 1789, twenty-one (20.5 %) could be identified as belonging to the families of forestry officers and wood merchants of Quillan. Among the forestry officers (10 mentions) figured prominently the Loubets, a family of *garde-marteaux*.³⁵⁵

³⁵³ ADAD, 3E13305, 'Registre notaire Me Laran, acte 1er août 1742'.

³⁵⁴ A list of delegates of the Languedoc *Etats* can be found on <http://etats-du-languedoc.univ-montp3.fr/index.php?menu=session&page=session&sessioncode=16781117>. (Some years were missing on this listing).

This glowing picture of economic prosperity does however not imply that all officers were similarly successful. Paradoxically, in Quillan the office of *maître particulier* provided a counter-example, indicating that economic strength, and official hierarchy could appear in reverse order. This counterintuitive observation signals the existence of a deeply rooted fracture within the institution, with far-reaching consequences, not only for the officers' personal fate, but also for the functioning of the whole institution.

Quillan's maître particulier

Between Jean Gasse de Contigny, the first purchaser in 1677 of the newly-created office, and Louis Rouzaud who was forced to sell it in 1734, the office of *maître particulier* in Quillan remained in the same Gasse-Rouzaud family cluster for fifty-five years. They descended from notables of Lavelanet, a small town thirty kilometres west of Quillan, with a professional profile presenting a typical mix of commercial and legal activities. After inheriting the office from his uncle in 1696, Jean Rouzaud went to live in Quillan, where he lived gratuitously in the *Maison Royale* with his numerous family. After his death in 1719, the office was bequeathed to his widow, Antoinette Pepratx. During the minority of her eldest son Louis Rouzaud, Jean's brother, Joseph Rouzaud Moureny, acted as interim *maître particulier*, from his Lavelanet home, until 1726, during which time Antoinette Pepratx was said to have lived with her nine children on "200 ou 250 livres de revenus."

³⁵⁶ Part of that income came from an investment in a government bond secured on the *tailles*, created in 1720 at a rate of 2 %. ³⁵⁷ From Jean Rouzaud's testament it appears that the family office was the only security to cover for her children's inheritance. ³⁵⁸

Between 1720 and 1733, together with her son Louis Rouzaud and her brother Bernard Pepratx (a wood merchant of Caudiès twenty kilometres south-east of Quillan), Antoinette Pepratx used her office to engage in a number of dubious, forestry-related activities. Relying mostly on their own, out-of-town connections, the group committed various "abus et prévarications" in the royal forests. This course of action ultimately sealed the family's fate after the *Réformation* commissioners picked up their case in 1737. When he reached his majority in 1727, Louis Rouzaud started on the family office, but he was abruptly dismissed after just four years, for "prévarications manifestes" committed during his time

³⁵⁶ ADH, C1255, f.274r., 'Mémoire du Sr. Anceau (undated, ca.1736)'.

³⁵⁷ ADHG, 1C3300, f.226, 'Quittance de finance de 3,000 livres pour jouir de 60 livres de rente..., en faveur d'Antoinette Pepratx, 25 avril 1723'.

³⁵⁸ ADHG, 1C3306, 'Testament de Me Jean Rouzaud, Me particulier des Eaux et Forêts..., 1719'.

in office. After a decade-long series of legal proceedings, the *Réformation* judges imposed additional fines on that family. This not only drastically diminished the value of the office, but during these ten years the family had very limited access to the proceeds from the sale of the office because they were being held in *séquestre* for security. Just before they pronounced their final sentence in 1744, Louis Rouzaud went into hiding, and the family disappeared forthwith from the forestry scene.

In addition to this troubled trajectory, records suggest that despite having held onto this relatively respectable office for so long, in terms of economic success, the family never rose above a modest position. There was little evidence of economic activity against Jean Rouzaud's name, like rental income from land or buildings, or other types of financial operations. While the three daughters of the *greffier*, Jean Roillet, received dowries in the range of 2,000 livres each, the two older Rouzaud daughters only received 500 livres each. The oldest, Marie Rouzaud, died ignominiously, after having traded her belongings to pay for drugs and medical treatment during her illness. They included all her furniture, her bed, and sheets described as "fort usés."³⁵⁹ Two of Marie's sisters married into modest local merchant families. Access to a prominent position within the *maîtrise* was clearly no guarantee of personal economic success.

The most likely cause for such misfortune – apart from Louis Rouzaud's obvious personal unsuitability for public office - was the family's status as town outsiders. Both Jean Gasse de Contigny and his nephew, Jean Rouzaud, originated from Lavelanet, and Antoinette Pepratx descended from a merchant family of Couiza, ten kilometres downstream from Quillan. Crucially, during their residence in Quillan the family remained loyal to their own networks outside town. Before his death in 1719, Jean Rouzaud had entrusted the legal inventory of his possessions to his brother in Lavelanet and his brother-in-law in Couiza, Louis Pepratx. Furthermore, among the twenty godparents of their ten children (all of whom were born in Quillan), only three were Quillan residents. In the opinion of *grand-maître* Claude Anceau, Jean Rouzaud might well have been a good servant of the king who had worked "avec exactitude et probité,"³⁶⁰ but as an outsider he had been unable to penetrate the networks which could have opened the doors to more profitable activities.

³⁵⁹ ADAD, 3E13305, 'Registre Notaire Me Laran, 1er décembre 1743'.

³⁶⁰ ADH, C1255, f.19r., 'Lettre Claude Anceau (5 déc.1718)'.

While we cannot draw general conclusions from this one example, the Rouzaud case alerts us to the existence of a fault line within the *maîtrise* separating *maîtres particuliers* from the other officers. In the case of the Rouzauds, their status as town outsiders was a powerful obstacle to their integration, which also prevented a cohesive, collaborative *maîtrise* unit from developing. Examples from other *maîtrises* show that internal rifts could also have different causes. As we shall see next, the separateness of the head of a unit could be exacerbated through noble status, especially for the earlier part of our period. Whether through non-residency or social distinction, the relationship between the *maître particulier* and the rest of the officers was a crucial factor in determining the effectiveness and authority of the provincial *maîtrises*, which could readily turn into a vulnerable spot in Colbert's well-structured, rational forestry system.

The end of old forestry nobility

As we saw in chapter two above, the prestige of the sixteenth-century forestry institution was linked to the noble status of its most distinguished members. This allowed the *souverains-maîtres* and some of their subaltern officers to command the necessary moral authority to deal with members of the higher orders. Many of them had forests included in their fiefs, and when they adjoined royal forests, they did not hesitate to take advantage of fuzzy or absent material demarcations to encroach on them in relative impunity.³⁶¹ As members of nobility themselves, these early royal forestry officials were best suited to represent the authority of the king and of his forested interests in the province.

Louis-quatorzian governments continued to welcome the linkage of forestry and old nobility. To buttress the authority of the *Réformation* commission of Languedoc in 1667, Froidour chose noble François de Roux, seigneur de Puivert, to assist him. De Roux came from a longstanding financial-judicial family of Carcassonne. One of their members, Pierre de Roux-Montbel, was *syndic général des Etats* in 1662.³⁶² *Capitaines forestiers* like Pierre de Négré were often *gentilshommes*, considered “hommes instruits, exerçant des fonctions d’encadrement social.”³⁶³ Pierre de Négré belonged to one of the principal noble families of the region who provided the *baillis* of the Pays de Sault. In 1689, when the

³⁶¹ Poublanc, *Compter*, 295.

³⁶² Beik, *Absolutism*, 232-3, n.20. The three *syndics généraux* of the *Etats* were responsible for overseeing the implementation of the decisions taken by the various commissions.

³⁶³ Christian Fruhauf, “Les forestiers dans les Pyrénées avant la Réformation des années 1660”, in: Andrée Corvol, ed., *La Forêt* (Paris, 1991), 236.

Clairvaux priory dragged their feet over the compulsory survey and delimitation of its forests, *grand-maître* Thimoléon Legras chose noble Anthoine de Dales, seigneur de Boisse, *maître particulier* of Rouergue et Quercy, to deal with the reluctant clerics.³⁶⁴ In the *maîtrise particulière* of Toulouse, the *garde-marteau* office belonged to a member of the Gramont family, which also included a *président des enquêtes* at the Toulouse *Parlement* and several bishops. One of them, the baron de Lanta, was a particularly active member of the *Chambre de la noblesse* at the *Etats*.³⁶⁵ This historical association of forestry and the old nobility was still alive at the beginning of the eighteenth century. In 1707, the preamble of the edict creating *maîtres particuliers alternatifs et my-triennaux* in every *maîtrise* used the argument that “ces nouvelles attributions seront d’autant moins à charge à l’Etat que la plupart des maîtres particuliers sont Gentilshommes.”³⁶⁶

To get a clearer idea of this association, a sample of 144 names of forestry officers of all categories, has been analysed with reference to nobility. It covers nine *maîtrises particulières* of the Toulouse *Grande Maîtrise* between 1644 and 1789 (Table 10).³⁶⁷

Table 10 Grande Maîtrise of Toulouse: Noble and non-noble officers in a sample of 144 forestry officers (1640s-1789)

	Noble	Non-noble
Maitre particulier	7	35
Lieutenant	1	32
Procureur du roi	0	39
Garde-marteau	3	27
TOTAL	11	133

Intriguingly, only eleven individuals (7.6 %) were confirmed nobles, most of them in the *maître particulier* category, such as Jacques Busquet in Villemur, or Jean-Olivier Dalles de Boscaut in Saint-Gaudens. Even more striking is the fact that no member of old noble families accessed forestry posts after 1715. After that date, they disappeared from the

³⁶⁴ AN, G7, 1349, f.70r., ‘Lettre T.Legras (24 mars 1689)’.

³⁶⁵ Durand et al., *Des Etats dans l’Etat*, 59.

³⁶⁶ AN, G7,1368, ‘Proposition de création d’un office de maître particulier alternatif et mi-triennal (aout 1707)’.

³⁶⁷ Based on De la Chesnaye-Desbois, *Dictionnaire de la Noblesse* (Paris, 1766-1778). Also Henry de Caux, *Catalogue général des gentilshommes de la province de Languedoc...* (Pézenas, 1676).

personnel charts. Joseph-Marie Malpel de Latour, *lieutenant* of Villemur, became *anobli* after he inherited the post in 1760. He was the son and successor of Pierre Malpel, from a prominent bourgeois family of that town. In terms of social status, it appears therefore that officers like Jean-Olivier Dalles, Pierre de Négre or Barthélémy de Gramont represented the rear guard of a traditional model of foresters anchored in ancient nobility.

The end of Louis XIV's long reign, then, marked a watershed, as intermediate forestry offices were progressively taken over by members of the mercantile and legal bourgeoisie, well anchored in the local urban society. When nobility returned to forestry later in the century, it was in the form of *anoblis*. The non-ennobling, unprofitable forestry office might have appeared increasingly unattractive for families of old nobility. Overcoming their traditional disdain for commercial and financial success, some of them might have shifted their social ambitions towards alternative routes bearing better prospects of "immense profits, power and prestige."³⁶⁸ Seen in conjunction with the inverted hierarchy between *maîtres particuliers* and subaltern officers observed above, this structural change is thoughtprovoking. It confirms that after the end of Louis XIV's reign, the gloss and prestige of the old association of forestry office and ancient nobility was being superseded by the empowerment procured by the accumulation of wealth and solid financial strategies.

This take-over of the forestry office by members of the third estate, who were the drivers of economic life in many small towns, will be part of a wider survey of the qualitative aspects of the forestry office, and the socio-professional trajectories of its holders. This analysis will go some way towards explaining why the Colbertian foresters and their descendants remained so long loyal to an office, which, notwithstanding the limited rewards and privileges it enjoyed, remained financially an unattractive option.

The forestry office, qualitative analysis

Maîtrise personnel, a stable framework

The organisational chart of forestry personnel reproduced in Annexe 2 provides an overview of our corpus. Predominantly based on information provided by the *lettres de provisions*, it is a visual representation of the diachronic and synchronic evolution and

³⁶⁸ Doyle, *Venality*, 223.

transmission patterns of the office-holders in the *maîtrise particulière* of Quillan between 1650 and 1789.³⁶⁹ Taking into account the existence of kinship ties between families bearing different names, we have identified ten major forestry ‘dynasties’ during this period of approximately 135 years, of which Table 11 provides a synopsis.

Table 11 Quillan: Ten main dynasties of maîtrise officers (1640s-1789)

FAMILY CLUSTER	OFFICE CATEGORY	TOTAL TENURE
Gasse de Contigny-Rouzaud	Maître Particulier	1677 – 1732 (57 years)
Marsol	Maître Particulier	1734 – 1789 (55 years)
Besset de Garard	Lieutenant	1676 – 1681, 1690 – 1716 (31 years)
Jaubert	Lieutenant	1681 – 1686, 1724 – 1789 (70 years)
Malleville	Procureur du Roi	1676 – 1699 (23 years)
Pinet de Brezilhou	Procureur du Roi	1700 – 1726 (26 years)
Terrisse	Procureur du Roi	1727 – 1762 (35 years)
Roillet – Malroc (?)	Procureur du Roi	1762 – 1789 (27 years)
Pinet - Cachulet - Loubet	Garde-marteau and receveur particulier	1647 – 1789 (142 years)
Dordet – Roillet	Greffier	1685 – 1789 (104 years)

The chart reveals some salient characteristics of the early modern forestry office in terms of the status of the post (commission or office) and lengths of tenure, pointing to familial monopolies. Firstly, Colbert’s attempts at removing venality by gradually introducing commissioned posts across the forestry hierarchy were particularly unsuccessful at the level of the *maîtrises particulières*. In Quillan, *lieutenants* and *gardes-marteaux* whose office was in the family since the 1640s, continued as before, while the posts of *maître particulier*, *procureur du roi* and *greffier* were being reinstated as offices as early as 1674.

Across all categories the periods of tenure for individual officers were generally long, occasionally interrupted by brief periods with more rapid changeovers. Their average length in post represented roughly one generation, ranging from twenty-three years (*maîtres particuliers*) to twenty-eight years (*procureurs du roi*). It was somewhat shorter for the *gardes-marteaux* (sixteen years). This post stability even weathered the war years

³⁶⁹ Because of travel restrictions in 2020, some information for the later part of the period could not be included.

and proliferation of *alternatif* offices of the 1700s, suggesting a stable long-term operational basis for forestry work in Quillan.

Scrutiny of the names in the chart (Annexe 2) and Table 11 confirms this impression of stability – or, perhaps, closure to outsiders. There was clear aspiration to concentrate offices within the closest familial sphere. In the *maître particulier* category, the office remained with the Contigny-Rouzaud cluster for fifty-five years, and when it shifted in 1734 into Marsol hands, it stayed with them for the same length of time, until 1789. A similar picture of familial longevity emerges for Quillan's *procureurs du roi* associated with the names of Malleville, Pinet, Terrisse and Roillet. While these family lines have been separated in the table, closer scrutiny of individual genealogies shows kinship links, albeit to a more distant degree than the other lines. Despite a more irregular pattern, just two rival families, the Bessets and the Jauberts, monopolised the lieutenancy office for 150 hundred years. The *Cachulet-Loubet* clan controlled the garde-marteau post for 142 years, seemingly unperturbed by the suspension of Pierre Cachulet in 1670 for his illegal wood trading activities.

The hold on the forestry office of this particular family cluster was further strengthened by the addition of the office of *receveur particulier*, a treasury post created by the edict of December 1701 in every *maîtrise* of the kingdom. This creation introduced for the first time a financial dimension into the legally oriented *maîtrise*. It was well endowed. With 400 livres annually, it carried higher *gages*, but also more privileges than other *maîtrise* offices, notably the prized exemption from the *taille*. With Antoine Cachulet's son Jean-Antoine, his nephew Estienne Loubet, and their descendants, the Loubet-Cachulet clan retained the exclusive monopoly of the combined offices of *garde-marteau* and *receveur particulier*.

Such familial hegemony was not unique to Quillan. A survey of the names, lengths of tenure and office transmission mode of 250 forestry officers in all eleven *maîtrises particulières* of Toulouse between 1674 and 1788, shows that it was a common feature across the wider forestry scene. In thirty cases (12 %), the office was passed down to heirs bearing the same family name. This could include two, three, or even four successive generations. The actual percentage is likely to have been much higher, as successors with different names could, as in Quillan, have been close relatives. The average lengths for these multi-generational tenures were remarkably similar across all categories: fifty-five

years for *maîtres particuliers*, fifty-three for *lieutenants* and *garde-marteau*, and sixty years for *procureurs*. More generally, these analyses confirm that in forestry too, and contrary to real estate that could be subject to the complications of partible inheritance, “offices offered an appealing element of stability and continuity, safe and indestructible down the generations, a hedge against the uncertainties of life and posterity.”³⁷⁰

Honing down on the specifics of the transmission mode adds another element to the characterisation of the forestry office. A transfer of office could happen in one of four possible ways: acquired from the *Parties Casuelles* after a new creation or at a later stage, should it return to the crown; transmitted through inheritance after death; designation by the incumbent holder during his life time, against payment of the *annuel*; or sold directly on the private market. The corpus overview in Annexe 3 also identifies the mode of transmission at each transfer. The results are summarised in Table 12. The most common transmission mode was by bequest or resignation before death. It occurred in two-thirds of the cases, overwhelmingly to close family members. The office was acquired from the *Parties Casuelles* only in nearly one-quarter of the cases. It rarely touched the open market.

From the perspective of the crown, the familial hegemony on the forestry office appearing in these analyses might be seen as a warrant of stability in the forestry system. On the other hand, more frequent returns to the crown’s treasury would have helped to regain control of forestry recruitments, and opening the office to candidates from outside local networks would have helped to curb collusion and fraud. The hereditary nature of the venal office in the administration of forestry removed it largely from governmental control.

Table 12 *Quillan: Mode of transmission of the forestry office*
(1655-1789)

Mode of transmission	How often occurred
Bought from parties casuelles (PC)	6
Designated or bequeathed (*)	17
Private sale (£)	4
Total	26

³⁷⁰ Doyle, *Venality*, 157.

In a number of cases, the transfer involved an intermediary third party before the office reached the intended recipient. These arrangements often concerned widows or other female heirs. In 1675, the widow of *garde-marteau* Pierre Cachulet nominated her oldest son François, who, “ne désirant se faire pourvoir,” designated his brother Antoine. As the case of Louis Rouzaud and his mother suggests, legal ownership of office and executive function could be split, which allowed partners a shared control of finance and profits. Even for these modest offices, manipulations like these demonstrate the influence of private interests on the administration of a *bien public* such as forests. As a “portion de la puissance publique devenue objet de commerce et propriété privée,”³⁷¹ the forestry office eschewed, at least partly, control by the centre.

Turbulences

The smooth generational flow of transmission was at times interrupted by periods of turbulence, when disruptive circumstances led to more rapid changeovers and speculative trading. The gravest disruptions were caused by a noxious combination of personal failings and legal prosecution after instances of fraud and abuse of office. Our personnel chart highlights two such troubled periods, at the start of the new regime (1670s to 1690), and again from 1719 to 1734.

The first period corresponds to the initial decade after the abrupt regime change of the Colbertian *réformation*. It occurred against the backdrop of momentous changes in the upper echelons of the hierarchy. Louis de Froidour, the charismatic reformer and *grand-maître*, died in 1685, two years after his mentor Colbert. Froidour was succeeded by Thimoléon Legras, an experienced forestry officer, former *commissaire des domaines et bois* in Provence and *grand-maître* of Poitou. In 1686, a newly-created office of *receveur général des domaines* ousted the longstanding commissioned treasurer of the *Grande Maîtrise*, Aymé Riquier, who had been one of Froidour’s most trusted allies.

In all eleven *maîtrises* established in 1671, the first decade were years of confusion, as posts on commission overlapped with traditional offices monopolised by a small number of families. It took more than ten years to staff them fully. Some posts remained vacant for

³⁷¹ Olivier Chaline, *Le règne de Louis XIV* (Paris, 2005), 175.

years. By 1677, only three *maîtrises*, Saint-Gaudens, Saint-Pons and Quillan, had been fully staffed. Rodez was in 1681 still missing its *maître particulier* and *garde-marteau*. The situation of Villeneuve-de-Berg was desperate. In 1682, the first holder of the *maitre particulier* office was Nicolas de Froidour, the oldest son of the *grand-maître*, who had to seek age dispensation because he was only eighteen years old.³⁷² After a stint of just over one year, Nicolas left to continue his career in Paris. Froidour did not harbour any illusions about the risks of manning the new structures with men lacking training and experience. “Ces officiers, n’ayant ni assez d’expérience ni assez de crédit et d’autorité ni assez d’affection pour soutenir avec toute la vigueur qui était nécessaire l’exécution des règlements qu’on leur avait confiée et ne voulant pas d’ailleurs se charger de la haine publique sans utilité, laissèrent insensiblement reprendre les anciens errements des usurpateurs et des délinquants.”³⁷³

In Quillan the situation after 1671 was particularly unsettled. After four transitional years, the *maîtrise* suddenly acquired a whole new generation of officers within just two years. The new *maître particulier* (Jean Gasse de Contigny) who had just received his *licence de droit*, and the *procureur du roi* (Jean-Francois Malleville) bought their offices from the crown as first holders, the latter after a speculative move involving one intermediate owner. In parallel, the offices of *lieutenant* and *garde-marteau* also changed hands with the arrival of Jean Besset and Antoine Cachulet, another young *licencié*. The lieutenancy succession was particularly troubled. Hailed by Froidour as “un officier fort intelligent, fort appliqué a sa charge et fort zélé au service du roi,”³⁷⁴ ageing Pierre Besset had resigned his office in favour of his son, Jean Besset. After two brief years in office, Jean Besset was prosecuted for fraud and abuse of office, briefly imprisoned, and heavily fined. To cover his debts, he sold the office to a family outsider in 1681, the judge of Quillan Guillaume Jaubert. After Jean Besset’s untimely death in 1683, his siblings contested the sale and claimed the office back for the family. After a convoluted legal dispute, an *arrêt du Conseil* finally returned the post to Jean’s brother, François Besset, pending reimbursement of Jaubert’s purchase.³⁷⁵ A few months later, in June 1687, François resigned again in favour of a Gabriel Charpentier, but three years later, Charpentier handed the office back to François Besset. Between 1676 and 1690, Quillan’s *lieutenant* post had

³⁷² AN, V1, 25. ‘Lettres de Provisions (1682)’.

³⁷³ Quoted in Bartoli, ‘Louis de Froidour’, 73.

³⁷⁴ ADHG, 8B024, f.47r., ‘Procès-verbal de Réformation de Quillan. Jugements. (12 mai 1673)’.

³⁷⁵ Details in ADAD, 5J18, ‘Extrait d’arrêt du Conseil intervenu entre Jean Gasse de Gontigny, [...], Guillaume Jaubert, [...], François Besset, Jean Maet et autres, au sujet d’offices à la maîtrise de Quillan qui remplace le bureau dudit lieu, 27 août 1686.

thus changed hands five times. Disruptions like these were not uncommon. In Isle-Jourdain the widow of the outgoing holder of the *lieutenant* post had designated Jean-Jacques de Forgia as his successor, but Forgia passed it immediately on to a third party, Sr. du May. Following financial difficulties, du May lost it again to a fourth contender, Jean-Jacques Soullery.³⁷⁶ While these acute periods of disorder would have impeded the normal functioning of the unit, their effects remained limited to the individual *maîtrise* and the personal sphere of the officers.

Not so with Quillan's second troubled period. With no less than nine transfers in all categories between 1727 and 1734, the turmoil not only severely affected the *maîtrise*, but it also triggered the active involvement of the central authorities. After a long period of quiet, a new, inexperienced team took charge in 1727, but here again it was not long before the young officers faced disciplinary measures because of professional misconduct and fraudulent activities. In 1732, *garde-marteau* Jean-Antoine Loubet was suspended for one year, and *maître particulier* Louis Rouzaud was fined and forced to sell the family office. The case however did not end there. Over the next few years, Louis Rouzaud's repeated complaints and denunciations to the *Conseil* let the situation spiral into a full-blown crisis, compounded by personal hostility and discord within the *maîtrise*. This second crisis went well beyond an ordinary case of personal score settling impacting the lives of individuals or local families. Rouzaud's actions exposed to public scrutiny the extent of collusion, fraud and abuse of power that had been left to occur, unchallenged, over the previous two decades. According to public rumour duly relayed by the commissioners themselves, Louis Rouzaud's actions had been instrumental in sparking the ten-year long, costly, second *Réformation* of Quillan. By crossing the glass ceiling of official tolerance, this individual had prompted a conspicuous response from the authorities in the capital, which, as will be seen in chapter four, escalated well beyond a mere judicial redress of individual cases. Ultimately, it affected the entire region.

Endemic conflict

Conflicts were not confined to unusual crises such as these. The source material suggests that in day-to-day practice too, *maîtrises* were riddled with internal strife. The vehement quarrel between *lieutenant* André Boire and *garde-marteau* Etienne Loubet recounted in the first chapter was just one of many similar occurrences. Discord between *maîtres*

³⁷⁶ AN, V21, 'Lettres de Provisions, (1681)'.

particuliers and *lieutenants* were frequent enough to be labelled as “la plaie des maîtrises.”

³⁷⁷ In Quillan, the authority of a *lieutenant* like Pierre Besset, who had single-handedly managed the small forestry bureau for three decades, was abruptly displaced when the office of *maître particulier* was formally established. As a newcomer in Quillan’s forestry affairs, and a town outsider, Jean Gasse de Contigny claimed his share of the *droits de passe* the very day of his installation, and issued a corresponding *ordonnance*. This arbitrary action led to a bitter conflict with the Besset family, which destabilised the functioning of the *maîtrise* for over a decade.³⁷⁸ Many similar conflicts were similarly driven by power struggles and financial motives. In Castelnaudary for example, the problem resulted from a diverging interpretation of the *lieutenant’s* title, whereby the attribution of certain rights depended on whether the *lieutenant* was deputy to the head (implying personal dependency), or to the *maîtrise*.³⁷⁹

The general impression of endemic conflict and lack of collaborative spirit emerging from these examples must be interpreted with caution. It could result from the official and judicial nature of most of our source material. Given the high levels of endogamy existing between forestry families, it could also represent the spillover of ordinary family feuds into the professional sphere. Furthermore, no evidence was found of a corporate organisation of mid-ranking forestry officers, contrary to the *compagnie des grands-mâîtres* or the *syndic des marchands de bois, radeliers et autres commercants en bois de Quillan et Esperaza*. This meant that they lacked a collective structure that could have helped to arbitrate internal conflicts in the *maîtrises*. Accordingly, they did not develop a cohesive *esprit de corps*. They remained a professional group, though linked by a common general legal framework, which left individual officers free to develop other forms of allegiance through networks of support and beneficial alliances with members of their immediate social environment.

Overall, this overview of the mid-ranking forestry post has demonstrated that an outwardly stable, centralised system, organized along rational lines, could be critically upset by personal factors in the lower echelons of an institution, whose dynamics remained largely outside the reach of the authorities. It confirms the fragile nature of an administration based on the close interlinkage of public and private interests. These broad assumptions can be refined, and further qualified, by examining the career strategies of Quillan’s

³⁷⁷ Waquet, *Les Grands Maîtres*, 225.

³⁷⁸ ADAD, 5J18, f.7r., ‘Extrait des Registres du Conseil d’Etat (27 aout 1686)’.

³⁷⁹ This discussion is developed in Pecquet, *Loix*, I, 200-217.

forestry officers, and the effects of the scant promotion opportunities that were available to them.

Forestry careers

Legal and local ancestries

The greatest challenge for determining the geographical, social and professional origins of social groups is the haphazard availability of biographical data, especially for pre-Colbertian periods. From the information gleaned from notarial, judicial or genealogical records, it was nevertheless possible to identify some characteristics of the ‘lead ancestors’³⁸⁰ for thirteen different forestry dynasties of the Quillan *maîtrise*. (Table 13)

Two main features emerge from the information collected in Table 13: the predominance of the legal professions, and a very narrow geographical base. In half the cases, the ancestry of the new foresters of the 1670s included legal professions such as *juges*, *procureurs de bailliage*, or *notaires*. Only in two cases did the forefathers come from the forestry sector itself: former *lieutenant* Pierre Besset and *garde-marteau* Pierre Cachulet had been the only officers of Quillan’s minuscule pre-Colbertian forestry bureau. The financial milieu was totally absent, and the merchant community was only represented for a later ‘starter’ in forestry, Pierre Pinet de Brezilhou, who acquired the *procureur du roi* office in 1700. In 1671, Colbert’s new structure had not been attractive for merchants who were well established in their trade, or did perhaps not bring the education requirements for the posts. For the sons of Quillan’s old legal families, on the other hand, it provided a much-needed new outlet.

In terms of geographical origins, Table 13 describes a particularly narrow perimeter. The majority of ‘lead ancestors’ had been town residents. *Maîtres particuliers* who were exempt from residency requirements, lived in nearby towns because of their compulsory presence at the weekly court sessions. At thirty kilometres, Lavelanet was the most distant place of residency of their first holders, and Pierre Marsol descended from a family of *notaires* and *procureurs* of Roquefeuil, twenty kilometres west of town. His direct successors in the Quillan office still lived there at the outbreak of the Revolution.

³⁸⁰ A ‘lead ancestor’ is defined as the first individual, usually father, grandfather or uncle, entering a specific institutional or professional pathway.

Table 13 Quillan maîtrise: Socio-professional and geographical origins of first office-holders

NAME	OFFICE CATEGORY AND YEAR OF 'LETTRES DE PROVISION'	SOCIO- PROFESSIONAL ORIGIN	DETAILS	GEOGRAPHICAL ORIGIN
Jean Gasse de Contigny	Maître particulier (1677)	'Bourgeois'	Family seigneurs de Contigny, near Moulins, settled in Lavelanet (unknown date).	Lavelanet
Jean Rouzaud	Maître particulier (1696?)	Merchant, Bourgeois	Father (Jean-Pierre) was 'marchand-bourgeois', Consul of Lavelanet in 1670 and 1690.	Lavelanet
Pierre Marsol	Maître particulier (1734)	Legal	Father (N.?) was Procureur du roi at the Bailliage of Sault.	Roquefeuil
Jean Besset	Lieutenant (1676)	Forestry	Father (Pierre) was lieutenant de maîtrise since 1644	Quillan
Guillaume Jaubert	Lieutenant (1681)	Legal	Father (Louis) was judge of châtellenie Quillan; grandfather, 'docteur es droits'.	Quillan
André Boire	Lieutenant (1719)	Legal	Family origins unknown. André Boire was châtelain and judge of Quillan before his brief stint in forestry.	Quillan
Jean- François Malleville	Procureur du Roi (1676)	Legal	Father (Pierre) was notaire. Forefathers had been notaires in Lavelanet since at least 1600.	Lavelanet
Pierre Pinet de Brezilhou	Procureur du Roi (1700)	Merchant	Father (Michel) was wood merchant.	Quillan
Louis Terrisse	Procureur du Roi (1727)	'Bourgeois'	Father (Joseph) was 'Bourgeois', Assesseur de la maison de ville in Quillan.	Quillan
Pierre Cachulet	Garde-marteau (1655)	Forestry	Father (Jean) was garde- marteau since 1647.	Quillan
Etienne Loubet	Garde-marteau (1708)	Legal	Father (Antoine) was lieutenant of châtellenie in Quillan.	Quillan
Jean Dordet	Greffier (1685)	Unknown	unknown (Dordet was perhaps an alias of the Roillets).	unknown
Jean Roillet	Greffier (1717)	Legal	Father (Michel) was notaire. Grandfather was Procureur juridictionnel Quillan. Family of Quillan notaires since mid- seventeenth century.	Quillan

Forestry descendants, a blurred picture

Reversing the gaze, Table 14 outlines the career trajectories down the line of twelve first holders of a forestry office, including sons, nephews, sons-in-law, and their successors. The picture is blurred, not least because information about careers of the latter part of the century is too sparse to venture conclusive interpretations. The circumstances of the departures from the forestry office of *receveur particulier* Thimoléon Cachulet and *procureur* Louis Terrisse in the 1760s could not be ascertained.³⁸¹ The picture is clearer for the cases where descendants remained loyal to forestry until the institution's abolition by the *Assemblée Nationale* in 1791, including at times four successive generations. If the familial transmission got severed because the holder died in office, or after voluntary mid-career departures, descendants showed a preference for staying in Quillan, especially if they could access one of the rare legal occupations as a *châtellenie* agent or local judge. The case of Louis Rouzaud is an exception. After his sentencing in 1744, he absconded from the region, which marked the end of the family's forestry line.³⁸²

The addition of the office of *receveur particulier* in 1701, which introduced for the first time a financial responsibility in the *maîtrise*, added another dimension to this synopsis of forestry careers. It was an opportunity immediately seized upon by a member of the local wood merchants, Jean-Pierre Pinet. After 1711, it remained firmly in the hands of Pinet's close relatives, the Cachulet-Loubet *garde-marteaux* clan - the only office that did not require a law degree. Working for the archbishop of Narbonne was an attractive alternative for officers who wished to leave forestry. After having been the 'king's man' at the *maîtrise* for twenty-six years, *procureur du roi* Pierre Pinet de Brezilhou became the seigneur's *châtelain* and judge, looking after the archbishop's legal interests and judging in his name. He followed in the footsteps of his merchant ancestors, who traditionally looked after the decimal rights and exploited the forests of the Narbonne prelates. Cardinal de Bonzi, archbishop of Narbonne between 1673 and 1703, placed his forestry interests in the hands of professionals like *maîtrise* officers and wood merchants.³⁸³ By entering the archbishop's service in 1726, Pierre Pinet had in reality not wandered far away from his roots.

³⁸¹ Due to travel restrictions in 2020.

³⁸² Louis Rouzaud might have joined his uncle Bernard Pepratx, who had already left the region to become *écuyer* of Louis XV's war secretary d'Angervilliers.

³⁸³ ADAD, 3E7749, 'Registre notaire Me Siau, juin 1699'.

Table 14 *Quillan: Long-term careers of forestry families*

Name of last holder of forestry office	Category	Association with forestry office: when ended?	Association with forestry office: how ended?	Details
Jean-François Malleville	Procureur	1700	died in post	Career of son (Pierre-Jacques) not known. Nephew Jean-François 2 was Premier Consul and Greffier (1730), then procureur fiscal of châtelainie Quillan
François Besset	Lieutenant	1716	died in post	No known descendants; office returned to crown. Nephew (Louis Riquier) was lieutenant de juge de châtelainie Quillan
André Boire	Lieutenant	1724	resigned	Returned to his main function as châtelain et juge ordinaire Quillan
Pierre Pinet de Brezilhou	Procureur du Roi	1727	resigned	Merchant family of Quillan; left forestry to become juge ordinaire, and châtelain of Quillan after Boire
Louis Rouzaud	Maître Particulier	1732	sentenced to sell office	No known descendant. To avoid sentence in 1744, he might have joined his uncle Bernard Pepratx, who had left Quillan to become ecuyer of war minister Dangervilliers
Thimoléon Cachulet	Receveur Particulier	1767?	died in post?	Last of a line of garde-marteau and receveurs particuliers in Quillan; bequeathed office of receveur to Jean-Antoine Roillet, probably a relative?
Louis Terrisse	Procureur du Roi	1768?	resigned?	No surviving male descendant; probably resigned and designated Guillaume-Augustin Malroc, a legal family of Mirepoix, 50 kms northwest of Quillan
Etienne-Alphonse Loubet de Saury	Garde-marteau	1789	Revolution	Loubet-Cachulet family cluster was in forestry since at least 1645 until Revolution. In 1825, son of Etienne-Alphonse Loubet (Guillaume-Louis-Philippe) was “brigadier de Gendarmerie Nationale” in Peyriac, 77 kms north of Quillan
Jean-Louis-Augustin Jaubert de St-Joulia	Lieutenant	1789	Revolution	Jaubert family line in forestry since 1681 (with interruption 1686-1723). After 1789, Jean-Louis described as “Propriétaire, Juge de paix du Canton de Limoux, Avocat au Parlement, Commissaire du Roi, Premier consul, Maire de la ville de Quillan”
Jean-François Marsol	Maître Particulier	1789	Revolution	Marsol family line from Roquefeuil, 25 kms west of Quillan; remained in forestry from 1734 to Revolution
Guillaume-Augustin Malroc	Procureur du Roi	1789	Revolution	Merchant family of Mirepoix; Relatives of the Jauberts and Roillets; Guillaume died in Quillan in 1814. Brother 1, Jean-Maurice-Florentin, was garde du corps, emigrated. Brother 2, Guillaume-Dominique, was judge in Mirepoix
Michel (2) Roillet	Greffier	1789	Revolution	Old-established family of notaires of Quillan. Greffiers of the <i>maîtrise</i> since 1717; Louis Roillet was maire of Quillan in 1812

Not only did the forestry families show little inclination for leaving forestry, nor the legal domain, but they also remained loyal to their town. Regardless of career changes, descendants of forestry families remained living in or near their town of origin, sometimes well into the nineteenth century. According to Jean Nagle, such sedentary lifestyle was a hallmark of *officiers moyens*, and contrasted with the mobility of *officiers souverains*,³⁸⁴ and for Michel Cassan, “cette sédentarité imposée peut être dévalorisée dans les représentations d'une société qui vit dans un monde qui loue la mobilité, le déplacement, le voyage.”³⁸⁵ Furthermore, a study by Josef Smets of the power dynamics at work in Languedocian villages suggested that the length of residency of a family carried more weight than their economic situation.³⁸⁶ This hierarchy of values could well have also applied to a small town like Quillan.

Municipal loyalties

At this intermediate level, the forestry office appears as a self-contained professional world, associated with geographical immobility, and allegiance to local structures. An in-depth analysis covering a larger corpus would be helpful here to confirm this hypothesis more conclusively. In the case of Quillan's foresters, the idea of strong loyalty to the town is buttressed by their continuing involvement with honorary public duties (Table 15). This concerned officers of all categories, apart, here again, from the *maître particulier*. The loyalty to the town endured: under the Napoleonic and Restoration regimes, long after the family had left forestry behind, descendants of the Roillets and Pinets still appeared as elected *maires* of Quillan. Service to the town could include unpleasant, even loathsome aspects, but as a form of *pouvoir informel* it also conferred authority upon its bearer. Even the reviled collector of municipal debts enjoyed a degree of control over his fellow residents.³⁸⁷ Such construction ‘from below’ of personal authority was a common feature of early modern urban societies. In Normandie, Pierre Doré, a modest-ranking officer of justice, significantly bolstered his moral authority by assuming petty supplementary

³⁸⁴ Jean Nagle, ‘Officiers “moyens” dans les enquêtes de 1573 et 1665’, *Les Cahiers du Centre de Recherches Historiques*, 23 (1999).

³⁸⁵ Cassan, ‘De l’État “moderne”’, 471.

³⁸⁶ Josef Smets, ‘Les chemins du pouvoir dans le village Languedocien (17e-19e siècles)’, Actes du LVIXe Congrès de la Fédération historique du Languedoc méditerranéen et du Roussillon, *Libertés Locales et Vie Municipale en Rouergue, Languedoc et Roussillon*, (Montpellier, 1988), pp. 185-190, 189.

³⁸⁷ Marcel, *Quillan*, 384.

functions.³⁸⁸ For old-established forestry families too, continuing involvement in municipal affairs suggests that attachment to the town constituted an important part of their identity.

Table 15 Quillan: Honorary municipal functions of forestry officers

NAME	CATEGORY OF FORESTRY POST	MUNICIPAL CHARGE	DATE
Guillaume Jaubert	Lieutenant	Consul Moderne	1683
Joseph Terrisse (father of Louis)	Procureur du Roi	Assesseur de la maison de ville	1680s
Antoine Cachulet	Garde-marteau	Délégué aux Etats	1684
Antoine Cachulet	Garde-marteau	Collecteur des dettes de la communauté	1684
Jean Roillet	Greffier	Premier Consul	1731
Louis Terrisse	Procureur du Roi	Consul moderne	1741
Jean-Antoine Loubet	Garde-marteau	Consul moderne	1741
Louis Terrisse	Procureur du Roi	Marguillier	1744
Jacques-Louis-Joseph Augustin Jaubert	Lieutenant	Délégué aux Etats	1787
Jacques-Louis-Joseph Augustin Jaubert	Lieutenant	Maire et Premier Consul	1788-1790

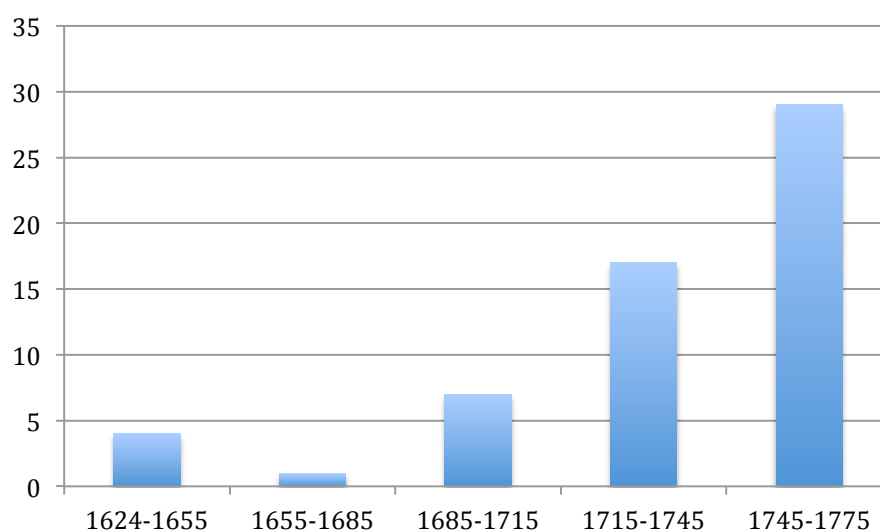
Education

On the other hand, while the combination of royal office and municipal charges significantly contributed to define the identity of these officers, the question arises whether these functions sufficed to fulfill the officers' quest for social elevation and political influence. After all, they had significant personal assets. As members of forestry families, they had first-hand experience of technical and legal matters pertaining to this specialist field. In the absence of any official training opportunity in the field, they received a form of 'in-house training' by their fathers or uncles. After college, this practical training was complemented by further legal education, usually at the university of Toulouse. Apart from

³⁸⁸ Zoé Schneider, *The King's Bench, Bailiwick Magistrates and Local Governance in Normandy, 1670–1740* (London, Rochester, 2008), 47.

the *garde-marteau*, most forestry officers came with a legal degree ranging from a two-year *bachelier* course to the four-year degree of *docteur-es-droits*. While it was not required for *maîtres particuliers*, all in our sample did come with a degree. Ten out of forty forestry officers of Quillan between 1671 and 1789 were titled as *avocats en/au Parlement*.³⁸⁹ This higher level of education, which also implied fluency in the French language, was a further factor of social differentiation, relative to the predominantly Occitan-speaking town residents and villagers. Forestry officers contributed to the regional surge of academic qualifications after 1715. (Fig. 17) Out of all students from Quillan, Lavelanet and Roquefeuil who studied at the universities of Toulouse, Cahors and Montpellier between 1624 and 1789, 61 % bore names related to forestry officers in our sample.³⁹⁰

Fig.17 Number of law students from Quillan, Lavelanet, and Roquefeuil at the universities of Toulouse, Cahors and Montpellier (1624 - 1789)
(Source: Ferté, *Répertoire géographique*)



Furthermore, their education reinforced the traditional legal orientation of forestry practice in the *maîtrises particulières*, at the expense of a more technical approach apt at fostering the scientific management and conservation of the forests, such as was fast developing in

³⁸⁹ The formal distinction between ‘au’ (referring to an actual post as magistrate in the Parlement) and ‘en’ (only a formal step for getting a judicature post elsewhere) was blurred in the records. See Maurice Gresset, ‘Le barreau, de Louis XIV à la Restauration, *Revue d’Histoire Moderne & Contemporaine*, 36, 3 (1989), pp. 488-496, 488.

³⁹⁰ Patrick Ferté, *Répertoire géographique des étudiants du midi de la France (1561-1793): pour un prosopographie des élites* (Toulouse, 2002), vol.5 (Bas Languedoc et Roussillon).

the German states.³⁹¹ While officers might have acquired a certain measure of technical knowledge and professionalism through familial training and hands-on experience, their approach to forestry remained primarily a legal one.

In principle, then, forestry officers could have used their education and experience to move into other areas of the judiciary, but there is no evidence that they did so. They were formally debarred from cumulating forestry with another jurisdictional function in the royal, municipal or seigneurial domains, but there was no sign that they sought to leave forestry to access a post at any of the *présidial* seats of Limoux, Carcassonne or Castelnaudary. A promotion up the forestry hierarchy itself was unthinkable. Mobilising credit of more than one hundred thousand livres to acquire an office of *grand-maître* was out of their reach. Moreover, the *Compagnie des grands-maîtres* jealously safeguarded their status by excluding applicants lacking sufficient social respectability.³⁹² Fundamentally, this narrow window of professional opportunities represented a weak spot in the monarchical forestry system. Contrary to *grands-maîtres* who could move up to a post in finance (for example as *receveur général des finances* or *maître des comptes*), or the military (as *gouverneur*),³⁹³ the officers of *maîtrises particulières* were restricted to making the best of the opportunities within their immediate reach – strengthening even further their ties and allegiances to the local sphere.

Authority-enhancing strategies

The situation described here does not mean that forestry officers were totally devoid of means of consolidating personal and professional prestige and authority within the forestry system itself. Combining an *alternatif* office with the *ancien* (when it was available) was an option. In the first decade of the eighteenth century, Jean Rouzaud was one of the few *maîtres particuliers* of the *Grande Maîtrise* of Toulouse who took it up. A more common strategy consisted in taking advantage of the formal distinction between legal ownership and executive function, which allowed participants to lease out an office. *Greffier* offices, in the hands of local *notaires* known for the lucrative nature of their business, were

³⁹¹ Leading the trend, eighteenth-century germanophone states promoted *Forstwirtschaft* as an autonomous, fully-fledged part of economy, close to agronomy. Out of many works on this: W.G. von Moser, *Grundsätze der Forstökonomie* (Leipzig, 1757); Kurt Mantel, *Wald und Forst: Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Natur und Wirtschaft* (Reinbek, 1961).

³⁹² The *Compagnie des grands-maîtres* famously refused the candidacy of Louis-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais on the grounds that he was a clock-maker's son.

³⁹³ Waquet, *Les Grands Maîtres*, 109.

particularly coveted. In one striking early seventeenth-century example, the *maîtres particuliers ancien* and *alternatif* of Toulouse, and the latter's wife, collected *greffier* offices in several *maîtrises* in all three forms, *ancien*, *alternatif* and *triennal*, and affermed them on to third parties.³⁹⁴ In 1688, the audit of the accounts of former *receveur général*, Aymé Riquier, uncovered that this treasurer had also been “propriétaire de la charge de greffier en la maîtrise de Quillan sous le nom du Sr Dordet.”³⁹⁵ The modalities of the changeover for Quillan's *maître particulier* office in 1728 are a particularly illustrative example. Just before her son Louis was due to assume his duties, Antoinette Pepratx obtained a notarial contract whereby, “nonobstant le transfert 'pur et simple' de l'office à son fils Louis, elle conservera toujours la propriété de manière qui luy sera loisible et le vendre ou de le bailler à telle autre personne qu'elle voudra et quand elle voudra [...] Lad. dame se réserve et aura annuellement à son profit tous les gages et augmentations de gages, droit du port, droits de récollement; moitié des journées et vacations, commissions extraordinaires [...] Louis pourra percevoir à son profit tous autres revenus.”³⁹⁶ While arrangements like these could serve as legal safety clauses, the Rouzaud case, further detailed in chapter four, also shows that when things went wrong, the contractors – in this case Louis Rouzaud and his mother – also shared the inherent risks and responsibilities.

The most empowering strategy was to cumulate different forestry-related offices within the close family sphere, already a common practice among *bailliage* officers.³⁹⁷ By allowing officers to combine financial and legal powers, the creation of the office of *receveur particulier* in each *maîtrise* was clearly a winning bid. In Quillan, the new office was immediately acquired for 2,500 livres by wood merchant and mayor Jean-Pierre Pinet Laprade, the cousin of *procureur* Pierre Pinet de Brezilhou, and uncle of *garde-marteau* Jean-Antoine Cachulet.³⁹⁸ After 1711, the Cachulet-Loubet family cluster retained this advantageous combination of *receveur particulier* and *garde-marteau* office as an exclusive monopoly until at least 1767, and most probably until the Revolution.

Opportunities like these remained, however, the exception. Fundamentally, in a small-town context such as Quillan, the forestry office represented a poor starting block for social and

³⁹⁴ ADHG, 8B35, B1, ‘Interrogatoire du Sr.Courdurier, 30 mars 1667’, quoted in Poublanc, *Compter*, 299.

³⁹⁵ AN, G71329, f.247, ‘Mémoire sur les debets du compte rendu par M. Aymé Riquier (21 avril 1691)’.

³⁹⁶ ADHG, 1C3306, f.217r., ‘Registre du notaire Jacques Forest, Toulouse, 25 fév.1728’.

³⁹⁷ Gresset, *L'introduction de la vénalité* (1989), 126.

³⁹⁸ AN, G7, 1364, n.p., ‘Comptes du traitant Gillet du Fay (22 fév.1707)’.

professional advancement. Here again, we can see a parallel with the “faible mobilité socio-professionnelle” of the *présidial* magistrates described by Vincent Meyzie.³⁹⁹ With their enduring social, professional and geographical immobility, forestry offices were a far cry from the ideal of the intermediary office as an effective stepping-stone for promotion, as suggested in Roland Mousnier’s idealised model for the legal professions.⁴⁰⁰ Nor could they compete with the intergenerational mobility of the sons of merchants and liberal professions described by Richard Kagan.⁴⁰¹ There was especially nothing that heralded the future clock-like promotion machinery of the forestry corps of the *Second Empire* and *Troisième République*. The picture emerging from the preceding analysis is one of a world focused on itself, encased inside narrow professional and social boundaries, and very much closed to outsiders. In seats like Quillan, the scant prospects of professional advancement provided by the royal office tied officers firmly to the local power sphere and its system of clientage. As the next section will show, this situation was compounded by a crippling lack of practical and moral support from the authorities. This diverted their energies into developing alternative strategies, in order to maintain their place among the elites of the town.

Fragile respectability

In Quillan, holding a royal office, however modest, was considered to be a badge of respectability and social distinction. A clue to the special consideration due to the forestry officers can be found in the way they were recorded in the parish registers. While entries were rarely qualified beyond a name, or at best a brief mention of occupation, they always appeared with their full titles. For the godfather of Jean-Pierre Pinet’s daughter, for example, the entry read “Mr Me François Besset, Conseiller du Roy, Lieutenant des Eaux et Forêts de la maîtrise de Quillan.”⁴⁰² A number of visible privileges like being exempt from burdensome services to the military or *tutelle et curatelle*, or exclusive treatment of court cases by the *présidial*, provided a sense of social distinction. On the other hand, they lacked the prized exemption from the *taille*, a serious dent in their honourability.

³⁹⁹ Meyzie, *Les illusions perdues*, 59-63.

⁴⁰⁰ Roland Mousnier, *Les institutions de la France sous la monarchie absolue (1598-1789)*, 2 vols (Paris, 1980), vol.2, 357-359.

⁴⁰¹ Richard Kagan, ‘Law students and legal careers in eighteenth-century France’, *Past and Present*, 68, 1 (1975), pp. 38-72.

⁴⁰² ADAD, 100NUM/AC304/1E1, ‘Quillan, 27 Août 1699’.

As depositaries of royal authority, and highly visible public figures, *maîtrise* officers were exposed to probing scrutiny on a daily basis. They were therefore enjoined to demonstrate a dignified countenance. “Nos rois persuadés que tout doit concourir et inspirer le respect pour les loix, et qu’il ne dépend pas peu du maintien et de la conduite de ceux qui en sont les dépositaires, ont eu soin de recommander la décence par plusieurs de leurs Ordonnances. C’est dans cette vue que l’on a ordonné aux officiers de Robe Longue siéger en habit de règle, aux Greffiers de porter respect aux Officiers du Siège, aux huissiers de faire faire silence, etc.”⁴⁰³ They were equipped with the usual material marks of honour and authority, destined to place “ceux qui en bénéficient en position d’autorité et de prestige, et ceux qui les subissent en position d’obéissance et d’humilité.”⁴⁰⁴ A distinctive apparel and head dress, the ceremonial sword worn by the *maître particulier* and the *garde-marteau* when they attended official sessions, the surveyor’s uniform when out in the field on measuring duties, were some of these signifiers.⁴⁰⁵ The tagging hammer, securely kept in its casket, carried a particularly high prestige as the material symbol of the king’s authority.

These material signifiers were enhanced by conspicuous elements of ritual and ceremony, included in ordinary forestry practice. Travelling ‘en corps’ on their regular inspection visits of royal or private forests, the riding parties of *maîtrise* officers would have been very noticeable as they passed through the villages. The wood auctions (*adjudications*) held each autumn at the *maîtrise* seat were colourful public events, which belonged to the yearly schedule of Quillan’s social life, on a par with its annual fairs. On that occasion, the town was teeming with bidders from surrounding villages, and the presence in town of the *grand-maître* and his “équipage” would have escaped no one.⁴⁰⁶ Even the more modest ceremonial of the weekly court sessions at the *Maison Royale* bringing together *maîtrise* officers, *gardes* and offenders, would have contributed to the moral authority of the institution. Duly marking the *hiérarchie visible* between *regardés* and *regardants* described by Arlette Jouanna,⁴⁰⁷ each of these aspects was part of the broad range of

⁴⁰³ Pecquet, *Loix*, I, 114.

⁴⁰⁴ Guy Chaussinand-Nogaret, et al., *Histoire des élites en France du XVIe au XXe siècle; l'honneur, le mérite, l'argent* (Tallandier, 1991), 12.

⁴⁰⁵ Some forestry uniforms have been reproduced in Annexe 4.

⁴⁰⁶ A vivid contemporary description of an eighteenth-century wood auction can be read in Bernard Desjobert, *Un grand maître des eaux et forêts du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, s.d., probably beginning nineteenth century).

⁴⁰⁷ Arlette Jouanna, ‘Des ‘gros et gras’ aux ‘gens d’honneur’’, in: Chaussinand-Nogaret et al., *Histoire des élites*, pp. 17-141.

strategies, “from military force to subtleties of etiquette,” deployed by French monarchs in the day-to-day practice of power to uphold royal authority in the eyes of their subjects.⁴⁰⁸

In the daily reality of their professional service, however, these symbolic elements were no rampart against “la haine publique.” As protectors of public order, “ils ont le malheur de n’être établis que pour faire le mal, étant juges de rigueur.”⁴⁰⁹ In a letter to the *intendant des finances* Louis Fagon, Quillan’s officers complained that “[l]a conduite que [...] nous sommes obligés de tenir pour remplir le devoir de nos charges nous rend odieux aux grands et aux petits qui habitent ces montagnes ou qui y possèdent des domaines.”⁴¹⁰ Dealing with unruly members of the higher orders was a particularly difficult aspect of their duties. When they challenged the baron d’Escouloubre in 1677 for not complying with the regulations, he threatened them first with “jurements et blasphèmes, les menaçant de coups de baston et d’estrières.” Accompanied by a group of ‘gentilshommes’, he then forcibly opened the *maîtrise* gaol to free a prisoner, “en telle sorte que lesdits officiers estoient non seulement sans autorité, mais mesme mesprisables et n’osoient s’entremettre d’aucune fonction.”⁴¹¹ Calling on the *maréchaussée* was an expensive measure, which they used only in extreme situations. Faced with situations like these, the authority of *maîtrise* officers was fundamentally undermined by a crippling lack of effective enforcement powers to support the implementation of unpalatable measures.

This delicate position was not helped by the fact that they belonged to an institution that had long struggled to establish its authority. As we have seen in chapter two above, the distinctiveness of forestry jurisdiction had been a thorn in the eye of rival jurisdictions and bodies like the *Parlements* or *Etats*, which included influential, forest-owning members of the first two orders. On the other hand, many of these institutional contests were increasingly fought in the courts, away from the public eye. A far more direct and effective way of undermining the institution was to defy the *préséance* rights of its officers, reflecting the perception of social order on the local scene. Order of precedence in processions, churches, or public assemblies was a closely watched display of relative authority and respectability. When Froidour inaugurated the new *maîtrise* of Saint-Girons in 1671, the seating plan was carefully monitored: “à droite et à gauche [of Froidour] les

⁴⁰⁸ Swann, *Exile*, 31.

⁴⁰⁹ Quoted in Baudrillart, *Traité*, vol.1, xv.

⁴¹⁰ ADH, C1255, ‘Lettre des officiers de la maîtrise de Quillan à Monseigneur Fagon, 16 août 1718’, pièce 21.

⁴¹¹ ADAD, 63C5, f.69, ‘Procès-verbal de visite, 8 mars 1678’.

officiers desdites maîtrise et gruerie chacun selon le rang que lui donne son office, le juge et les consuls de ladite ville présents et assis sur un banc au dessous de nous.”⁴¹² Forestry archives abound in *préséance* disputes. In 1708, the *maître particulier* of Saint-Pons deplored that “les offices des maîtres particuliers sont fort avilis en ceste province où les juges royaux et les consuls des lieux des sièges des maîtrises leur contestent et empêchent leur préséance aux droits honorifiques, dans les églises et assemblées publiques.”⁴¹³ In Quillan, the *préséance* of lieutenant Pierre Besset over the town’s *juge baneret* had to be continually re-affirmed by a string of *arrêts du parlement*.⁴¹⁴ In Rodez, a particularly long and acrimonious precedence dispute involving the Dalles, a dynasty of *maîtres particuliers*, ended in a humiliating public challenge to their noble status, and the temporary imprisonment of one of their members.⁴¹⁵ As Beik pointed out, the authority of these officers rested on feet of clay if not buttressed by the “intangible *crédit* based on custom and public approbation.”⁴¹⁶

The lack of an adequate official response to ongoing challenges like these is indicative of the fundamental attitude of the forestry authorities. It suggests that, in the century-long tussle around royal intrusion into local and provincial affairs, officers of provincial *maîtrises* were considered disposable front line pawns. For sixteenth-century political theorist Charles Loyseau, *Eaux et Forêts* officers were not part of the ‘honourable’ magistracy “qui ont l’auctorité de commander,”[...] “les seuls officiers dont la puissance est un éclat et influence de la puissance absolue du Prince”.⁴¹⁷ Two centuries later, a practitioner like Antoine Pecquet, *grand-maître* of Rouen, deplored that forestry officers suffered from a “mépris mal entendu que certains états supérieurs affectent de faire tomber sur les officiers des Eaux et Forêts.”⁴¹⁸ In the same way as the sovereign courts considered subaltern *présidial* officers with “un mépris peu charitable,”⁴¹⁹ the upper forestry circles referred to provincial agents as “médiocres personnages”, not much more than “soliciteurs de procès.”⁴²⁰

⁴¹² ADHG, 8B8, f.390r., quoted in Bartoli, ‘Louis de Froidour’, 24.

⁴¹³ AN, G7,1349, f.160, ‘Lettre de Sr.Royré, (10 oct. 1708)’.

⁴¹⁴ ADAD, 63C3, f.70v., ‘Extrait des Registres du Parlement (31 mars 1665)’.

⁴¹⁵ Raymond Granier, ‘Cinq générations de maîtres des Eaux et Forêts pyrénéens: les Dales, sieurs de Boisse (Tarn) 17-18e siècle,’ *Revue de Comminges et des Pyrénées centrales*, 1 (1981), pp. 79-86, 85.

⁴¹⁶ Beik, *Absolutism*, 179.

⁴¹⁷ Nagle, ‘Officiers moyens’, paragraph 6.

⁴¹⁸ Quoted in Baudrillart, *Traité général des Eaux et Forêts*, vol.1, xvi.

⁴¹⁹ Pierre Goubert, ‘Les officiers royaux des présidiaux et bailliages dans la société française du XVIIe siècle’, *XIIIe siècle* (1959), pp. 54-75, 57.

⁴²⁰ ADHG, 1A12, t.2, f.16v., ‘Procès-verbal de Réformation générale..., Villemur, 11 janvier 1673’.

In sum, officers of the *maîtrises* occupied an uncomfortable and ambivalent position in the post-Colbertian forestry system. They might derive some prestige and some financial sustenance from their office, but they could expect little moral and practical support, let alone promotion opportunities, from the system itself. By contrast, from a perspective outside the institution, longstanding ownership of a forestry office within one family added to the honourable status of these officers, who were well anchored in the municipal notability, and trusted members of the parish with a long history of service to the town. In the course of the eighteenth century, their investing in a lifestyle that brought them closer to ‘*vivre noblement*’ further enhanced this local support. For these modest officers, investing in that most desirable cultural model of the eighteenth-century urban bourgeoisies was an expensive option, which, crucially, tied them to the mercantile segment of the community.

‘*Vivre noblement*’

A distinguished town house, a court-of-arms, an estate of appreciable size, and above all a *seigneurie* name in the title, were all basic components of the ‘*vivre noblement*’, for which a solid financial basis was the key. Out of the thirty-three individual officers who were active in the Quillan *maîtrise* between the 1650s and 1789, one-fifth crowned their family estate with a *seigneurial* title. While this title did not confer noble status *per se*, it was a conspicuous sign of local ‘honourability’ traditionally reserved for the second order. Emphasis on display and representation meant that acquiring one or more town houses was an investment priority, preferably along the *grand’rue* or facing the main square. In Quillan, the family home of *procureur* Pinet, seigneur de Brezilhou, adjoined a house belonging to the évêque d’Alet. The imposing façade of the *Maison Roillet* owned by the *greffier*’s family rivalled with two stately neighbouring houses of the influential Pinets.⁴²¹ While on average ordinary town houses were valued at 200 to 400 livres in notarial sales contracts, the house included in the dowry of the *greffier*’s daughter was valued at 1,100 livres.⁴²² This brings even more into relief the contrasting situation of the Rouzauds. With his “maison entièrement ruinée, à ciel ouvert” which he had purchased in 1709 for 100

⁴²¹ Details from Marcel, *Quillan*, 460-462.

⁴²² ADAD, 3E13295, ‘Registre Notaire M.Roillet (26 déc. 1734)’.

livres, *maître particulier* Jean Rouzaud was unable to compete with his subaltern colleagues of the *maîtrise*.⁴²³

As a further marker in this quest, the royal edict of 1696, speculating on bourgeois pride, offered individuals, corporations and urban communities the opportunity to register their coat-of-arms (*armoiries*) against payment of a fee. As Table 16 confirms, nearly half of the twenty residents of Quillan who flocked to do so were officers of the *maîtrise* or close family members. Here again *maître particulier* Jean Rouzaud was conspicuously absent from the list.⁴²⁴

Table 16 *Quillan: Registration of Armoiries (1695)*
(Source: Hozier, *Armorial général*)

Name	Socio-professional category
Bertrand, N.	marchand bourgeois
Besset, François	lieutenant Eaux et Forêts
Bonnet, N	bourgeois
Cachulet, Antoine	garde-marteau Eaux et Forêts
Captier, Germaine de	veuve de N.de Mayreville, bourgeois
Delbes, Gabriel	bourgeois
Donnat	prêtre
Jaubert, Guillaume	juge châellenie
Laforge, N. de	marchand, bourgeois
Loubet, Etienne	bourgeois
Majourel	marchand, assesseur de maison de ville de Quillan
Malleville, Jean-François	procureur du roi Eaux et Forêts
Mauleon, seigneur de Nebias	noble
Pinet, N.	lieutenant châellenie de Quillan
Pinet, Pierre seigneur Laprade	bourgeois, maire perpétuel
Riquié, Aymé	bourgeois
Roillet, Michel	notaire
Roillet, Jean-Pierre	marchand bourgeois
Terrisse, Joseph	bourgeois, assesseur ville Quillan
Turle, N.	marchand drapier

⁴²³ ADAD, 3E,13291, 'Registre Notaire M.Roillet (18 août 1709)'.

⁴²⁴ Charles-René, d'Hozier, *Armorial général*, vols. XIV and XV (1696).

The preceding survey has amply demonstrated that, in order to get a clearer picture of the social positioning and self-perception of office-holders at intermediate levels of the forestry hierarchy, their office cannot be studied in isolation. From the broader perspective of longterm career moves, it appears that it was just one string in their bow. While it conferred them a degree of prestige and familial stability, it was financially unprofitable, left them feeling inadequately rewarded for their services, and kept them in a modest position within the hierarchy. As a result, their identity remained solidly associated with a formal and emotional attachment to their town, further consolidated by the quest for a conspicuous lifestyle based on astute use of familial resources. Caught between their superiors' lack of support, popular hostility, and the competition for visible signs of material prosperity, *maîtrise* foresters opted for choices that warranted them immediate recognition and respectability. Forestry families combined their office with other options, such as paid service to the town's overlord or voluntary involvement in municipal governance. Far from being antagonistic, these multiple allegiances were complementary and mutually beneficial. They represented a pragmatic response to the limited opportunities conferred by their office.

Most importantly, the consolidation of this nexus of royal and local assets relied on nurturing the networks of kinship, friendship or clientage that connected *maîtrise* officers to the most influential and economically dynamic segments of the local society. This strategy prioritised ties to local nobles and merchants. At the same time, and as will be expanded further in chapter four, these connections also impacted their official service in a way that suggests that, by mid-eighteenth century, there was no more sign of a more 'ethical' approach to service guided by impersonal, rationally-determined rules of conduct, than at the hopeful beginnings of Colbert's reforms.

Forestry networks

Quillan, a narrow social window

To obtain a comprehensive picture of the foresters' sphere of sociability, the examination of their relations with other leading residents of the town has been based on the assumption that these relations could be forged, maintained and strengthened by bonds of different nature and varying strength. First and foremost came matrimonial choices. By permanently associating two kinship groups, these choices are valuable indicators of these groups'

perception of their social identity and position in the local society. At the next level was the wider circle of kinship introduced by the marriage partner. While it is impossible to speculate on the nature of these relationships, in the social microcosm of Quillan, it is reasonable to assume that at least some of these links had a bearing on the officer's conduct and service. Also justifiable is the inclusion of associations with godparents, or with witnesses to important acts in their personal lives, as they represented conscious choices including an element of personal affinity and trust.

These various forms of 'relational events' have been collected from a variety of forestry-related sources, notarial, genealogical and judicial, and reproduced in Fig. 18. This chart distinguishes between the periods before and after 1715, and between two broad degrees of 'closeness'. The closest degree (in pink) refers to matrimonial choices of the officers and of their direct descendants.⁴²⁵ The blue section accounts for looser forms of association like godparenting, the witnessing of marriages, wills, or *actes d'émancipation*, and links through various business operations outside the professional sphere. The chart also distinguishes between nine different social and occupational categories. Alongside the better-defined 'legal', 'medical' or 'ecclesiastical' categories, generic denominations like 'bourgeois' and 'noble' reproduce the notations found in the sources.⁴²⁶ Adding to the uncertainties deriving from the somewhat haphazard origin of the data, another margin of error is introduced by the fact that in certain cases, 'bourgeois' could stand for another category (such as 'medical' or 'legal'). This listing of 'relational events' should therefore be read as indicative of certain trends rather than a statistical representation of forestry networks.

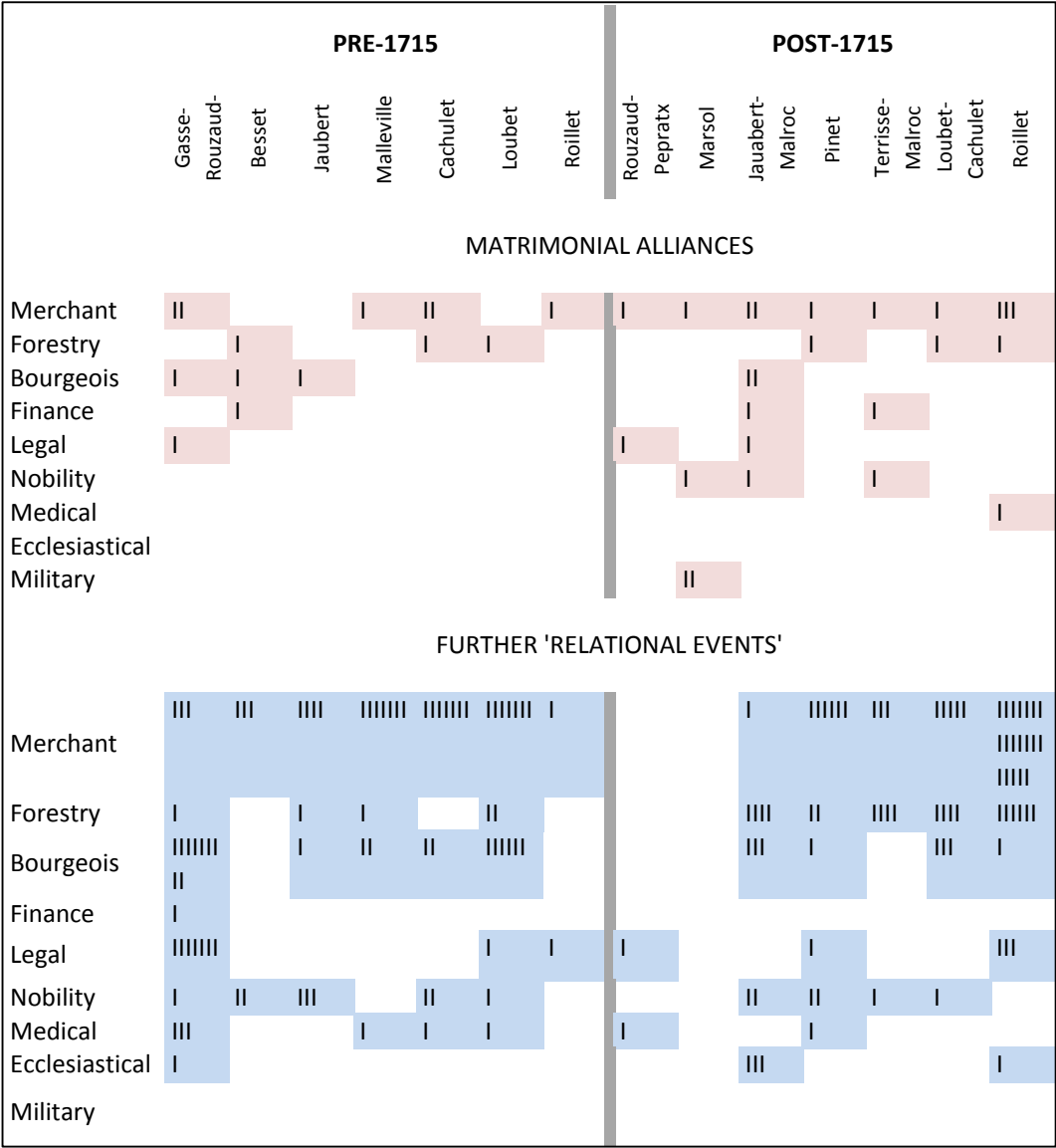
The first observation deriving from this matrix is the foresters' special affinity with the merchants, at matrimonial and other levels. Most of their 'partners' were wood merchants, or merchants holding a wood-related trade such as boxwood comb-maker (*peigneur de buis*). They provided more marriage partners than fellow foresters. While this might be a consequence of relative group sizes of merchants and officers, an element of voluntary choice cannot be excluded. The foresters' relations with the nobility focused on

⁴²⁵ This naturally assumes that parents had a degree of control over their children's choices of marriage partner.

⁴²⁶ Here, 'bourgeois' is taken as the non-juridical status of the urban rentier, defined by Pierre Goubert as a "mode de vie plus qu'un statut." (Pierre Goubert, Daniel Roche, *Les Français et l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1991) vol.1, 172). Here, bourgeois wealth is based on returns from land and buildings, and other non-commercial activities.

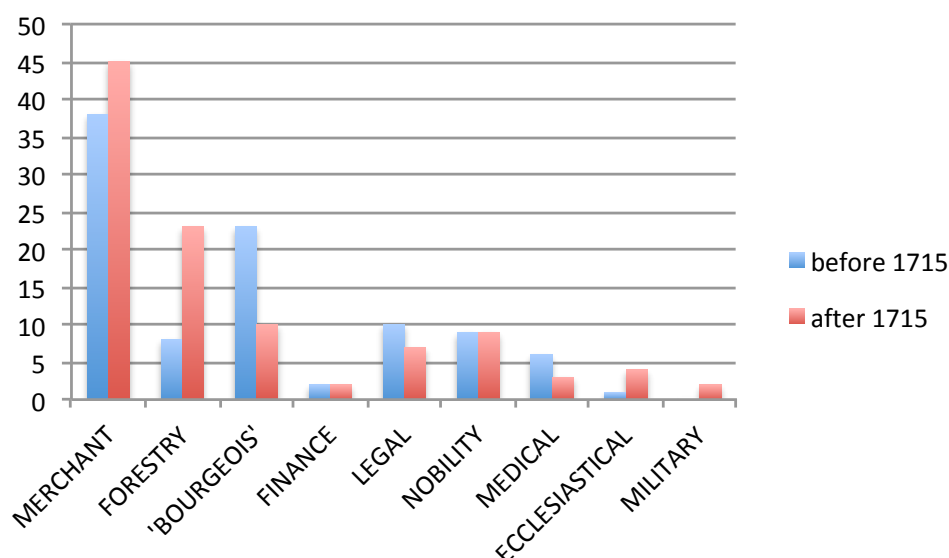
associations of a more distant nature. They were often called as witnesses for marriages, appeared as godparents, but were also frequent signatories in private financial deals.

Fig.18 *Quillan: 'Relational events' between major forestry families
and other social and occupational categories, before and after 1715
(1671 - 1745)*



To accentuate the trends, all fourteen family lines, and the two levels of relational closeness, have been amalgamated and condensed into just one broad category. This provides us with total numbers of undifferentiated 'relational events' for each of the two periods, charted in Fig. 19.

Fig.19 Quillan: 'Relational events' (combined) between forestry officers and other social and occupational groups, before and after 1715 (1671 - 1745)



This exercise shows that merchants were the milieu of choice, well above fellow foresters or 'bourgeois'. This correlates with the observation of Gabriel Pernet, the lead commissioner in Quillan's second *Réformation*, who on his arrival in town in 1736 observed that "il n'y a point de maisons [...] qui ne soient occupées par les officiers, leurs frères, beau-frères, oncles gendres, neveux et parents, ou par les marchands adjudicataires."⁴²⁷ Overall, these preferences suggest an acute awareness of a common social status, quite distinct from the more numerous groups of artisans or labourers identified in chapter two (Fig. 4). They confirm the perception that merchants belonged to the narrow circle of the town's elites. Another observation from Fig. 19 concerns the increase, after 1715, of intra-forestry 'relational events', and an equivalent decrease of the 'bourgeois' category. While the uncertainties of the method do not allow us to be conclusive, a broader investigation might determine whether this trend could be a sign of growing awareness of a distinctive professional identity.

The strong connections of the forestry officers with merchant families and members of the local nobility highlighted in the chart are especially thoughtprovoking. They raise

⁴²⁷ ADH, C1255, f.222v., 'Lettre Gabriel Pernet (23 octobre 1736)'.

important questions about possible clientage, and its influence on their service. It will therefore be useful to consider these two connections in some detail.

Officers and gentilshommes

In 1697, intendant Basville counted 4,486 families of *gentilshommes* for the whole province, of which less than fifteen possessed revenues of 20,000 livres in *rentes*.⁴²⁸ As Basville noted, “[La noblesse] n’est pas en ce Pays fort distinguée,” most of these petty nobles being “sans équipage, évitent toute occasion de dépense, & font profession d’une grande économie.”⁴²⁹ Some families were of ancient nobility, like those of the Maison de Foix (marquis de Rabat), or the Montesquieu, Roquefeuil, Niort, or Polastron de la Hillière. Basville considered the Négrés (Nigry) as “une des meilleures [familles] de Languedoc.”⁴³⁰ Ownership of forested estates brought some of these *gentilshommes* in frequent contact with the *maîtrises*. Court cases or other dealings with the Quillan *maîtrise* indicate that their forests were located within a radius of less than forty kilometres from the town.

Local nobles also entertained personal relations with the *maîtrise* officers and their families because of their forestry affairs and regular residence in town during the winter months. In Quillan, inter-marriage was uncommon, and typically restricted to *maître particulier* circles. In 1721, Pierre Marsol married into the La Barthe, a noble military family of Mont Louis, and his two sisters married into the Negré and Niort families. Most *maîtrise*-noble exchanges occurred in the form of financial transactions, godparenting or the witnessing of notarial acts. Mr. d’Ax de Cessales, seigneur de Cucugna and a seasonal resident of Quillan, was heard as a witness in one of the cases concerning Antoinette Pepratx, with whom he had business dealings.⁴³¹ In 1736, Marc-Antoine de Comignan witnessed the marriage of *garde-marteau* Jean-Antoine Loubet with the daughter of a prominent local wood merchant family, and in 1679, François d’Ax, seigneur de St Ferriol et Brezilhou (a small place three kilometers north of Quillan) witnessed the sale of the *lieutenant* office of Jean Besset to Guillaume Jaubert.⁴³² Interactions like these, in turn, facilitated real estate transactions: François d’Ax (son) sold the family *seigneurie* of

⁴²⁸ Basville, *Mémoires*, 123. Among nobles, 4,000 livres was considered the threshold to penury (*la gêne*).

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Ibid., 109.

⁴³¹ ADH, C1255, ‘Information par addition, (mars 1738)’.

⁴³² ADAD, 3E7739, ‘Registre notaire B.Siau, (23 juillet 1679)’.

Brezilhou to *procureur* Pierre Pinet, and in 1754, d'Ax' estate of Roquetaillade came into the hands of Pinet's successor, *procureur* Louis Terrisse.

Not all contacts were of an amicable nature. The records of the Table de Marbre are laced with legal contests between noble landowners and the *maîtrises*, some of which could acquire a sharp personal edge. In 1692, in one of the frequent boundary disputes opposing the *maîtrise* and the Baron d'Escouloubre, the *lieutenant* François Besset is labelled as the Baron's "enemy mortel."⁴³³ Examining the behavioural aspects of these provincial nobles, especially in seventeenth-century decades around the time of Colbert's first *Réformation*, shines a particularly crude light on the reality behind relationships between the *maîtrise* and rural nobles. Charles Loyseau had already described, in no uncertain terms, their propensity for rogue conduct and disregard for royal authority. "L'insolence des menus gentilshommes des champs est si grande [...] qu'il n'y a moyen de vivre en repos avec eux [...] ; ce sont des animaux sauvages, des oyseaux de proie [...] qui vivent de la substance d'autrui."⁴³⁴ Until his death in 1677, the Jansenist bishop of Alet, Nicolas Pavillon, waged a relentless war against the customary violence and depravity of many *gentilshommes* in his *diocèse*. The combative bishop excommunicated a number of them "pour injustices manifestes," which led to a coordinated cabal against him. It required the intervention of the king and the archbishop in Paris to calm things down.

These cantankerous *hobereaux* showed little regard for the crown's authority in matters of forestry, whose laws and rules they despised and openly flouted. Froidour's encounters with the dame d'Escouloubre or the marquis de Rabat of the 1660s are eloquent in that respect. In one of several stormy exchanges between Froidour and the marquis, the latter referred to the authority of the intendants as "petits ordres auxquels il n'avoit point d'égard."⁴³⁵ Froidour understood the need to tread carefully. "[C]omme tous ces petits seigneurs estoient autant de tirans il falloit absolument pour se rédimer de leurs vexations partager son bien avec eux et les appeler en paréage pour en retirer quelque protection."⁴³⁶ A frequent cause of friction was that many noble *seigneuries* adjoined the royal domain. In some cases a *seigneurie* could be co-owned, whereby justice rights were allocated to either co-owner, and the profits of the forests shared between them. Numerous *paréage* disputes

⁴³³ ADHG, 8B511, 4B4C, 2, 'Dossiers de la Table de Marbre de Toulouse, Production contre le Sieur Baron d'Escouloubre, 1692'.

⁴³⁴ Quoted in Jean Nagle, 'Officiers « moyens » dans les enquêtes', paragraph 10.

⁴³⁵ Castéran, *Les Pyrénées*, 18.

⁴³⁶ Id., 23.

arose from these arrangements, taking sometimes centuries to be settled. At times, noble forest owners took matters in their own hands, removing border stones, and using violence and intimidation “par les miquelets enrollés” to prevent the exploitation of a forest plot.⁴³⁷ In 1673, in a brazen snub to the *maîtrise*, the managers of Madame d’Axat’s forests chased off loggers harvesting a plot in a royal forest adjoining hers. In the early 1660s, Mr Coustaussa forcibly sequestered the *grand-maître*’s own *lieutenant* who had been sent to investigate a case of abusive annexation of parts of an adjoining royal forest. Similarly, it took a prolonged and forceful judicial intervention by the *Réformation* judges to remove Mr d’Escouloubre and Mr d’Axat from the crown forests they had unlawfully occupied.⁴³⁸

Defiance of royal authority did not prevent forest-owning nobles, especially their eighteenth-century descendants, from entering financial deals with the crown. The opportunities offered by increased royal demand for naval and construction wood were not lost on the marquis de Rabat who, after much initial sabre-rattling, settled with Froidour on an advantageous contract for one of his forests.⁴³⁹ Exchanges like these were not restricted to higher officials. In Quillan, local nobles regularly struck private deals with *maîtrise* officers. In February 1697, Jean d’Esperonnat, seigneur de Saint Ferriol entrusted *garde-marteau* Antoine Cachulet with collecting his seigneurial rights. In 1720, he acknowledged receipt of a debt owed him by the late father of Marc-Antoine de Comignan, seigneur de Dulhac.⁴⁴⁰

In the first decades of the eighteenth century, a certain appeasement in noble-*maîtrise* relations displaced the scathing exchanges from their forefathers. This trend contrasted with the unabated and often violent popular hostility against representatives of royal authority, *gabelle* collectors, forestry surveyors, or collectors of forestry fines. Noble forest owners focused on a more legalist form of defense against royal interventions. The bulk of litigation was of a civil rather than criminal nature, predominantly concerned with issues of title deeds or collaborating with the *maîtrises* to establish firm borders between adjoining forests. Rising numbers of compulsory pre-cut declarations by forest-owners of the two first orders in Languedoc indicate a more compliant attitude,⁴⁴¹ a trend also observed by

⁴³⁷ Id., 10-18. Also ADAD, 63c4, f.176-177v., ‘Froidour, Mémoire, 29 octobre 1676’.

⁴³⁸ Roschach, *Histoire générale*, vol.XIV, 409-411.

⁴³⁹ Castéran, *Les Pyrénées*, 50.

⁴⁴⁰ ADAD, 3E13292, ‘Registre notaire M.Roillet, (février 1720)’.

⁴⁴¹ To increase control over navy-grade timber in private forests, the 1669 Ordonnance and several subsequent rulings requested that owners submit a *déclaration de coupe* six months before felling

Hamish Graham for neighbouring Guyenne.⁴⁴² One of these ‘compliant’ eighteenth-century nobles was Marc-Antoine de Mauléon, whose father had been Froidour and bishop Pavillon’s nemesis. Personal proximity and ongoing interaction with the officers of the local *maîtrises* might have persuaded them of the benefit to be had by focusing on economic exchanges and collaborative relationships with the *maîtrise*. The financial affairs between the Cachulets and the d’Esperonnats, the Marsol marriages, but also the choice of a member of Négré family as *Etat* delegate for Quillan’s *tiers*, all demonstrate the broad and encompassing nature of this interconnection. Transcending the limits of ‘order’, these exchanges were rooted in mutually-beneficial, overlapping common interests around the region’s forests and wood-related issues.

Next to local nobles, the members of the officers’ network who had the highest stake in this nexus of interests were the wood merchants. They were in constant and close professional collaboration with the officers, but as the following analysis indicates however, by mid-eighteenth century, their relations with the royal institution had become complex and ambiguous. Their longstanding inclusion in forestry statutes suggests that they were a coopted, non-office-holding professional group within the royal forestry system, which also endowed them with a measure of leverage over it.

Wood commerce in Quillan

Officers and wood merchants were both essential cogwheels of the forestry system. In *maîtrise* towns, they shared the same operational spaces – the town square, the auction room, the river port, the surrounding forests - and their families lived at close quarters from each other. They also shared a common embeddedness in what has been described as a ‘forestry culture’. “Forestiers et marchands de bois sont ceux qui ont en commun une pratique, qui est plus [...] qu’un simple ensemble de techniques de coupe ou de transport, mais peut aller jusqu’à prendre la forme d’un véritable mode de vie: ceux qui sont capables d’apprécier l’état et la valeur d’un arbre, de négocier un contrat, de conditionner le matériau brut, d’en maîtriser le transport. Ils ont en commun des traditions, un langage,

this type of tree. See for example ADAD, 63C8bis, ‘Registre des insinuations (25 novembre 1737)’.

⁴⁴² Graham, ‘Fleur de lys’ (2009), especially 324-327.

des habitudes professionnelles, l'acquit de la vie en forêt.”⁴⁴³ What was the impact of this personal and professional promiscuity on the officers' service to the crown and the forests as a *bien public*?

The wood merchants were a key group for Quillan's local economy. Whether as forestry entrepreneurs or more modest wood-based artisan-traders, whose names appeared regularly in *adjudications* registers, their success was based on the industrious exploitation of the forests, buttressed by an effective defense of their interests through the *syndic de marchands et radeliers de Quillan et Esperaza*.⁴⁴⁴ Quillan's wood merchants served a wide and varied market. Operating at the junction between the dense forests of the higher Aude basin and the lowland zone along the Mediterranean coast, they supplied the markets of Narbonne, Montpellier, and Marseille. They furnished strategic centres of production such as the textile manufactures of Carcassonne, the naval merchants of Agde and Marseille for the fabrication of oars and small masts, or again the mining and fortification works in the upper valleys like Mont Louis or Perpignan.⁴⁴⁵

Not all bidders who took part in a wood auction were what Froidour called “*les vrais marchands*.” A cursory glance at Quillan's wood sales registers shows a small group of them regularly towering above a more numerous cohort of local artisans and ordinary residents. Small in numbers, this merchant elite was significant not only for the regional economy, but also for providing the bulk of the crown's forest income. Less likely to default on payments, their participation in the yearly auctions compensated for the frequent financial losses due to insolvent or fugitive *adjudicataires*. Christian Fruhauf's analysis of wood price evolution in the course of the eighteenth century suggests a fast widening gap between successful entrepreneurs and smaller bidders, leaving the bulk of wood commerce concentrated in few privileged hands. For the authorities, wood merchants were a particularly useful commercial agent, considered by Fruhauf, arguably, as “l'agent le plus compatible avec l'économie de marché qui se met progressivement en place.”⁴⁴⁶ On the other hand, their conspicuous but high-risk financial flights could lead to equally spectacular collapses. As Jean Boissière noted for Burgundian Morvan, where the

⁴⁴³ Jean Boissière, ‘Forestiers et Marchands de bois du Morvan à Paris’, *Revue Forestière Française*, Numéro spécial (1980), pp. 180-189, 182.

⁴⁴⁴ Esperaza, ten kilometers south of Quillan, was a centre of timber-raft building.

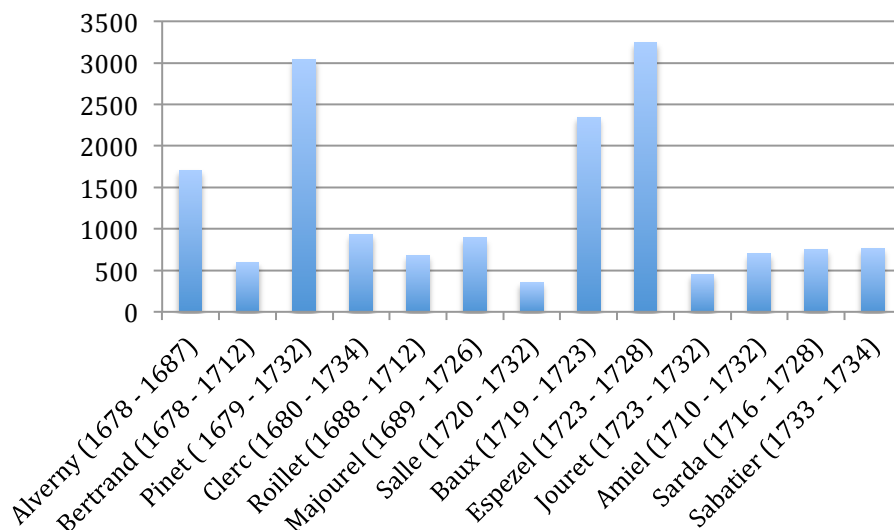
⁴⁴⁵ See Poujade, *Une société marchande*, 88-94. Also Gilbert Larguier, *Le drap et le grain en Languedoc. Narbonne et le Narbonnais. 1300 – 1789* (Perpignan, 1996).

⁴⁴⁶ Fruhauf, *Forêt et société*, 195.

competition for the lucrative Parisian markets was fierce, “on voit tour à tour des marchands s’enrichir, et d’autres se ruiner.”⁴⁴⁷

High bidders like those of Quillan contributed to the general increase of wood prices. Between 1704 and the 1730s, average prices of fir on the Sault plateau were pushed up from two to six livres/tree, with spikes of ten livres and more.⁴⁴⁸ As individual plots could sometimes cover several thousand trees, this could translate into a considerable surplus gain for the king. In Quillan, the special status of this group rested on a handful of longstanding wood merchant dynasties. Successful trading and strategic networking went hand in hand. Their preeminent status on the local scene was based on a high level of endogamy. Over time, merchant inter-marriage generated a powerful, close-knit caste of wood merchants, whose stellar-shaped networks were centred on names such as Amiel, Bertrand, Clerc, Espezel, Majourel or Pinet. These names also appeared regularly as the highest bidders in Quillan’s sales records. (Fig. 20)⁴⁴⁹

Fig.20 Quillan: Average annual investments by the most important ‘adjudicataires’ of Quillan (1678 - 1734)



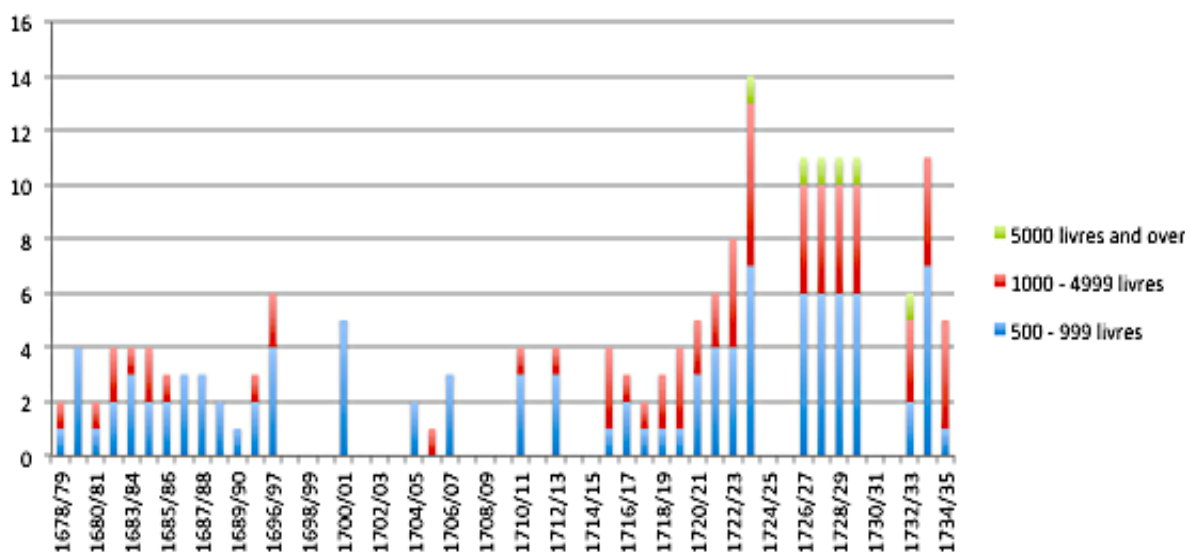
⁴⁴⁷ Boissière, ‘La forêt des marchands’, 135.

⁴⁴⁸ Fruhauf, *Forêt et société*, 66-67. For general price evolution, see ADAD, 63C, 32-37, ‘Registres des ventes et adjudications,’ covering the years 1679 to 1733.

⁴⁴⁹ The dates following the names refer to their active participation in sales.

The rise of the economic strength of this group of wood merchants can be illustrated by charting the number of *adjudicataires* bidding 500 livres and more at Quillan's auctions between 1678 and 1734. (Fig. 21) ⁴⁵⁰

*Fig.21 Quillan: Number of 'high bidders'
(above 500 livres) (1678 - 1734)*



This chart clearly marks the watershed of the 1720s, coinciding with the general recovery after the end of the Louis-Quatorzian wars and the uncertainties of the Regency period, and the growing influence of Louis XV's principal minister, Cardinal Fleury, who was a keen advocate of the kingdom's naval and commercial interests. ⁴⁵¹ At local scale, the surge of 1723 also signalled the end of a crisis decade marked by a slump in sales during the war years, aggravated by the climatic extreme of the 1709-1710 winter. After 1715, the average number of 'high bidders' ⁴⁵² per auction tripled, from 2.6 to 7.2. Scrutiny of the sales contracts reveals a particularly aggressive bidding process for the most promising items, which could take several days. This striking surge of investment volumes shows a buoyant mood and a great confidence in the market. It was also encouraged by the fateful decision by *grand-maître* Legras, back in 1685, to allow sales contracts to cover a number of consecutive years. These '*adjudications perpétuelles*' were expedients intended to rationalise administrative processes and after-sales controls, securing by the same token a

⁴⁵⁰ Some years missing.

⁴⁵¹ Campbell, *Power and Politics*, 144.

⁴⁵² High bidders are defined here as those bidding over 500 livres.

regular revenue for the treasury. It was no coincidence that the officer who had coaxed *grand-maître* Claude Anceau to authorise this venture in Quillan, was *procureur du roi* Pierre Pinet Brezilhou, a cousin of Henri Pinet and a close member of that influential merchant family.⁴⁵³ After a hesitant start, from 1715 this sales method became common practice throughout the *Grande Maîtrise*, until it was revoked again by the *arrêt du Conseil* of 29 May 1731.

In Quillan, the exceptional sales year of 1723 shows merchant Henri Pinet Laprade pledging over 11,700 livres/year for the next ten years. Fierce competitive bidding had pushed Laprade to bring the unitary price up to 11 livres 14 sols 14 deniers,⁴⁵⁴ which was more than double the average for that period, tree type and area.⁴⁵⁵ The contracts against Laprade's name represented 31% of the total sales figure for that year. We will see in chapter four the unforeseen consequences of Laprade's bold initiative.

Profits from wood trade were not the sole basis of the economic success of merchants like Laprade. Like the Pyrenean merchants studied by Poujade, wood merchants combined their trade specialism with a number of other profitable activities. They were involved in real estate, money lending, land rentals and *gazaille*. They also contracted various *affermes*, “celles du domaine de la ville, des revenus et rentes royaux et seigneuriaux et la levée des dîmes des gros décimateurs.”⁴⁵⁶ The management of forges and mills was particularly sought after. In 1678, Guillaume Bertrand bought the farm of the forge belonging to dame d'Escouloubre. By 1700 he also managed the royal forge of Sainte Colombe. To operate these works, Bertrand used his labourer debtors who, having few liquid resources, repaid their debts by “working or carting iron.”⁴⁵⁷ In the same way, Bertrand used debtors for his timber trade for the onerous overland carting of logs.

There is ample evidence that these merchants handled substantial liquidities, following the general mercantile principle that “l'argent devait d'abord circuler, s'orienter vers le commerce et non pas se figer dans la terre.”⁴⁵⁸ As the *Réformation* judge who prosecuted Etienne Espezel for suspected fraud in 1741 remarked, this merchant held most of his

⁴⁵³ ADH, C1255, 329r., ‘Mémoire des contraventions et négligences des anciens et nouveaux officiers de Quillan, 15 [illegible] 1738’.

⁴⁵⁴ ADH, C1257, f.27, ‘Points d'information pour le jugement, 24 février 1744’.

⁴⁵⁵ Based on Fruhauf, *Forêt et Société*, 174 (Figures 13-16).

⁴⁵⁶ Poujade, *Une société marchande* 160-161.

⁴⁵⁷ ADAD,3E13287, ‘Registre Notaire M.Roillet (30 mai 1681).

⁴⁵⁸ Poujade, *Une société marchande*, 168.

wealth "en argent, billets, et peu de fonds de nature."⁴⁵⁹ While they placed relatively modest amounts in governmental bonds such as that emitted in 1720,⁴⁶⁰ in the absence of a more developed banking system, merchants and nobles acted as a source of credit for each other, involving sometimes substantial sums. In 1713, a notaried document mentioned a debt of over 13,000 livres owed by mayor and wood merchant Jean-Pierre Pinet Laprade to noble Jean Rouger, seigneur de Carmain.⁴⁶¹ In 1681, Michel Pinet a manufacturer of boxwood combs and a regular high bidder at royal auctions, agreed to a debt repayment of 5,000 livres owed by noblewoman Françoise de Saint Jean de Moussoulens, Dame d'Escouloubre, by way of harvesting 2,200 firs from her estate.⁴⁶² For these business partners, trees were a safe currency. Most importantly, it was the same Michel Pinet who also advanced 1,121 livres for the construction of the new *maîtrise* building in the centre of town, the *Maison Royale*. Foresters too were caught in the merchants' nets.⁴⁶³

In the same way as their forester partners, wood merchants invested their wealth in town houses, *métairies*, vineyards and mills, and they also participated in the rush to acquire *seigneuries*. When Jean-Pierre Pinet became "seigneur de Laprade" in the early 1690s, he soon had entire families of the village trapped in a most lucrative web of debtors.⁴⁶⁴ Furthermore, the forests included in the Laprade estate allowed Pinet to monopolise the supply of firewood for the textile manufactures of Carcassonne. By cumulating contracts in crown forests and those of private owners, these merchants also represented major employers for the surrounding villages. In 1719, one charcoal merchant who had acquired a parcel in the royal forest of Comus was thus able to raise, quasi-overnight, a task force of "one hundred villagers."⁴⁶⁵

Forestry entrepreneurs, useful allies of the crown

These wood merchants were not only important regional actors, they were also essential intermediaries for the commercialisation of royal forests. Their participation at the yearly

⁴⁵⁹ ADAD, 63C63, f.32, 'Procès-verbal de réformation, Quillan (7 août 1741)'.

⁴⁶⁰ In 1724, Jean-Pierre Pinet Laprade and his relative Pierre Pinet placed together 1,695 livres in the government bond of 1720 (2 %). ADHG, 1C3305, f.94v., 'Quittance de Finance... en faveur de Jean-Pierre Pinet de Laprade; ADHG, 1C3305, f.95r., 'Quittance de Finance... en faveur de Pierre Pinet' (1724).

⁴⁶¹ ADHG, 8B507, n.p. 'Subrogation de dette, 29 décembre 1713.'

⁴⁶² Id., (7 janv.1681)'.

⁴⁶³ ADAD, 63C5, f.21v., 'Ordonnance de Louis de Froidour (11 janv.1678)'.

⁴⁶⁴ ADAD, 3E7745, 'Registre notaire B.Siau, juillet 1692'.

⁴⁶⁵ ADH, C1255, f.250, 'Mémoire des contraventions'.

auctions was the cornerstone of their collaboration with the *maîtrises*. After the end of the sales event followed the actual exploitation phase, which could last up to two years. During this phase, they were legally responsible for any fraud or misdeed committed within that area. The exploitation of a plot was a complex and risky task, which central authorities were only too happy to delegate to skilled merchants who understood the arcane rules of auctioneering, masterminded the complex logistics of logging, transport and conditioning of timber, and accepted the financial and operational risks involved in all these operations. They were ‘forestry entrepreneurs’ engaging in high-profit-high-risk ventures, in the meaning of Hélène Vérin.⁴⁶⁶ Together with other forestry professionals like the all-important sworn-in surveyor, wood merchants represented a coopted company of technicians, upon which the forestry system increasingly relied.

In practice, the association between the wood merchants and the *Eaux-et-Forêts* was one of interdependence and mutual control at multiple levels. The *journées* and other rights of the officers were covered by the *adjudicataires* who paid the *sol pour livre* for each of their sales items. In return, any dispute arising from contracts, transactions, or associations between the merchants themselves or with others could only be treated through the *Eaux-et-Forêts* courts, exclusively of any other jurisdiction.⁴⁶⁷ Merchants could only start harvesting, and their timber rafts could only leave the port, after the loads had been checked and tagged by the officers. At the end of the exploitation period, merchants and officers worked together at the *récollement*, checking the sales registers against the tagging marks left on the stumps or logs in the forest plot.

For the transport and distribution of wood products, merchants could rely on enabling legislation, in particular for urban provisioning - a politically sensitive issue – which drove the legislator to support the merchants even at the risk of antagonising others. They were mostly exempt of river tolls, and could use any land route they wished.⁴⁶⁸ They had right of way through private land to cart their loads from the forests to the rivers, whereby they could use “streams, ponds and even castle moats, manor houses and residences of other individuals,” and drive through their forecourts and parks if necessary.⁴⁶⁹ On floatable rivers, the owners of mills, sluices and weirs had to keep free passage for the rafts charged

⁴⁶⁶ Hélène Vérin, *Entrepreneurs, Entreprise, Histoire d'une Idée* (Paris, 1982).

⁴⁶⁷ Ordonnance 1669, Titre I, art. i, points iv and xiv.

⁴⁶⁸ Ordonnance 1669, Titre XVII, art.4. Confirmed by Arrêt du Conseil d'Etat du 23 aout 1695.

⁴⁶⁹ Nicolas Delamare, *Traité de la Police où l'on trouvera l'Histoire de son Etablissement...* (Amsterdam, 1729), vol.4, 869.

with timber. Whilst some material damage was inevitable on these heavy operations, merchants enjoyed legal protection against excessive compensation claims.

Wood merchants were also appreciated for their expertise and local knowledge. Some of them even achieved a certain degree of fame by advising the *Bureau de la Ville* in Paris in particularly complex cases.⁴⁷⁰ In his efforts to improve the control over the illegal activities of sawmills in Languedoc, Froidour had already sought advice of “divers marchands et notamment Michel Pinet et Guillaume Bertrand.”⁴⁷¹ Sixty years later, the *Conseil* recommended that the commissioners commission local merchants for inspection visits, “les seuls capables de juger de ces matières.”⁴⁷² Their proposals for technical innovations were positively received, even encouraged. In 1678, Froidour consented to let Guillaume Bertrand experiment with timber floating on the Puylaurens River towards the Roussillon. This would open up forests, which had never been exploited because of transport difficulties. In return, Bertrand was exempted, outside the usual fees, of “tous autres frais et droits comme droits de foraine.”⁴⁷³

Between the crown and the wood merchants as reliable and experienced agents for the exploitation of the forests, then, existed a definite convergence of interests. Scrutiny of the personal and professional links they forged with *maîtrise* officers, however, also reveals the darker side of this alliance. Merchants, well aware of their usefulness to the government, never lost sight of their own particular interest.

Forestry entrepreneurs, ambiguous allies of the crown

For this particular group, economic power and political influence went hand in hand. Out of sixty-two *consuls* of Quillan who could be identified between 1666 and 1741, eighteen (30 %) were wood merchants. This high percentage points to the special patronage of the archbishop, as he had control over the electoral lists. The political influence of wood merchants reached beyond the limits of the town. By dint of their trade, they could develop empowering connections with the elites of the whole region. Their connections with the local forest-owning nobility reached back many decades before the establishment of the

⁴⁷⁰ Boissière, ‘La forêt des marchands’, 136.

⁴⁷¹ ADAD, 63C33, f.47r., (1679).

⁴⁷² ADH, C1255, f.201, ‘Minute d’Ordonnance du grand-maître Claude Anceau, (16 novembre 1738)’.

⁴⁷³ ADAD, 63C32, f.13r., ‘Offre du Sr.Bertrand (18 mars 1678)’.

maîtrise, allowing relations of mutual trust to be consolidated. The seigneurs de Sainte Colombe, de Roquefort, the comtes de Pibrac, or their descendants, all entrusted the management of their forests to generations of Quillan merchants, notably the Pinets and Espezels. This particular connection also imparted them with some leverage over local forestry politics. In 1705, a group of nine dominant wood merchants of Esperaza, “excitez par plusieurs seigneurs qui possèdent des bois en l’étendue de la maîtrise de Quillan,” attempted to have toll fees on the river rescinded. The controversy drove other merchants to threaten the *grand-maître* with a boycott of auctions “s’il ne les assure qu’il empêcherait cette imposition.”⁴⁷⁴ In the neighbouring *maîtrise* of Comminges, merchants had substantial trade interests because of their role in provisioning Toulouse. As *grand-maître*, Froidour deplored the “cabales séditieuses des marchands de Toulouse et des facteurs, commis et apprentis qu’ils tiennent dans la montagne pour y faire leurs achats,” which substantially weakened the authority of the *maîtrise particulière*.⁴⁷⁵ After Froidour’s death, rulings intended to control merchant fraud fell rapidly into abeyance. Over-reliance on assertive merchant power also carried a risk for the legitimacy of royal policy and the king’s authority.

In Quillan, their longstanding relations with the archbishopric of Narbonne also empowered the merchants. Michel Pinet, followed by Jean-Pierre Pinet Laprade in 1688 and Etienne Espezel after 1720, were all *fermiers principaux* of the prelates managing their forests and collecting their seigneurial rights. These patronage contacts, in turn, helped their trade.⁴⁷⁶ In 1697, Jean-Pierre Pinet Laprade was contracted by Cardinal de Bonzi to have 1,000 fir cut and transported from one of his forests.⁴⁷⁷ High-level connections like these could at times morph into direct protection against *maîtrise* interference. After a brief spell in the *maîtrise* gaol for having supplied the army without the officers’ prior authorisation, the merchant Guillaume Bertrand went to Perpignan to put himself under the protection of de la Chaubrière, *lieutenant général de l’artillerie de France en Languedoc*, and of the duc de Noailles himself.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁴ AN, G7,1349, f.90v., ‘Demande de cassation d’une requête du Palais de Toulouse, Claude Anceau (15 juin 1706)’.

⁴⁷⁵ Quoted in Bartoli, ‘Louis de Froidour’, 39.

⁴⁷⁶ ADAD, 3E13288 and ADAD, 3E13289, ‘Registre Notaire Me Roillet (1682-1684).

⁴⁷⁷ ADAD, 3E7748, f.43, ‘Registre Notaire B.Siau (4 juin 1697)’.

⁴⁷⁸ AN, G7,1349, f.126, ‘Lettre de la Raubrière (10 mars 1707); id.,f.127, ‘Lettre Duc de Noailles (10 avril 1707)’.

Finally, merchants also exploited the opportunities offered by the royal office, cumulating various offices in a coherent, calculated way. When the crown offered town mayorships in August 1692, Jean-Pierre Pinet acquired the office for Quillan, later adding the *alternatif* and *mi-triennal*.⁴⁷⁹ Soon after, the family extended their reach directly inside the *maîtrise* by placing one of Michel Pinet's sons, Pierre Pinet Brezilhou, into the seat of *procureur du roi*. From 1701, mayor Jean-Pierre Pinet increased his control of forestry politics by adding the newly created office of *receveur particulier* of the *maîtrise*. Matrimonial alliances with forestry families were a further facet of their strategy. In 1698, one Pinet daughter married *garde-marteau* Antoine Cachulet. This was a particularly judicious connection with a professional group operating at the critical junction between the *maîtrise* and the merchants. Later in the century, the only surviving daughter of procureur Louis Terrisse, Marie-Thérèse, married Jean-Pierre Espezel de Villar, son of wood merchant Etienne Espezel, member of the new robe nobility. His function as *secrétaire du roi à la cour des aides* in Bordeaux did not preclude his continuing association with the thriving wood trade business of the new leader of the Pinet clan in Quillan, Claude Pinet Lapinouse.

Where the ascendancy of merchants over the forestry institution was most palpable was in the auction room. Like grain, wood as a commodity was highly sensitive to the general economic situation. In the offer-demand balance, *grands-mâîtres* may well have had control over the offer, but the merchants ultimately determined the success of the auction. Sometimes, they had to be cajoled into bidding. In 1681, they refused to bid claiming a depressed market because of unfavorable weather conditions and high grain prices. On another occasion, pressed by requests that formally contravened the letter of the law, Froidour confessed his powerlessness: “tous les marchands furent sur le point de quitter l’Audience, & [...] pour les retenir & les obliger à enchérir, je fus contraint de leur accorder ce qu’ils demandoient.”⁴⁸⁰ One century later, the *grand-mâître* of Compiègne, Louis Desjobert, similarly conceded ground, faced with the same situation: “Pour donner aux marchands qui se présenteront toutes les facilités possibles, nous nous sommes départis nous-mêmes de toucher comptant, suivant l’usage, le sol par livre du prix principal pour les journées et vacations, de sorte que le marchand n’aura rien absolument à payer d’ici la St Jean Baptiste prochaine.”⁴⁸¹ With their “*associations secretes*,” merchants could fix upper bid limits, a practice that no law was ever able to curb. Finally, and as will be more amply described in chapter four, the exploitation phase in the forests offered merchants

⁴⁷⁹ AN, V255, ‘Lettres de Provisions’ (1723).

⁴⁸⁰ Louis de Froidour, *Instruction pour les Ventes des bois du roi* (Paris, 1759), 263.

⁴⁸¹ Desjobert, *Un grand maître*, 20.

multiple and well-worn ways of eschewing controls. The sale by individual tree in fir forests which had to be conceded by Froidour left in practice the choice of trees to be harvested to the merchant, who, inevitably, chose “les plus gros et les plus beaux, ce qui dépeuple bientôt les forests.”⁴⁸²

From this survey of forestry networks focusing on their relations with local nobility and wood merchants, of a predominantly commercial, profit-oriented worldview, the forestry office emerges as an important, but subordinate, component of a broad range of strategies. In William Doyle’s triad of motives for acquiring an office - prestige, profit, and posterity - only posterity could be obtained through the forestry office alone. Prestige and profit were very much a joint venture.⁴⁸³

Summary

It will be useful to summarise the main outcomes of this long chapter. Their establishment in the 1670s as new office-holders in Quillan appeared particularly auspicious: the town’s longstanding tradition of wood business and pre-existing infrastructures as a raft-building river port held the promise of much forestry business, with substantial extra rewards such as *journées* and *droits de passe*. Initial valuations of these offices placed them in the lowest band of Languedoc’s elites, and calculations of their longterm profitability showed that after half a century, the return on invested capital dropped to less than 2 %. Inside the *maîtrises*, office values and *gages* levels suggested the preeminence of the *maîtres particuliers*, but a comparison of their fortunes with those of other officers inverted this ranking, which, in Quillan’s case, was most likely due to the non-residency of the family. This paradox is also connected to the dramatic change, after 1715, that affected the social status of the *maîtrise* head, moving from members of the old nobility to those of a rising small-town robe bourgeoisie. Overall, the pattern of office transmission showed a strong dynastic trend, with a small number of families monopolising the office until the Revolution, unless the flow was interrupted by the occasional but disruptive court case. Most forestry officers were linked to the judiciary. Those who left forestry of their own volition moved into the service of the archbishop, overlord of the town and *président-né* of the *Etats*. The general trend was to remain as close as possible to the town. With minimal

⁴⁸² ADH, C1255, f.49r., ‘Projet de Règlement des forêts de la maîtrise de Quilhan en conséquence de la conférence de Limoux du 8 décembre 1700 (n.d., probably 1702)’.

⁴⁸³ Doyle, ‘The price of offices’, 833.

support from the upper echelons of the forestry hierarchy, the officers focused on consolidating their local anchorage, and nurturing relationships with members of forest-owning nobles or successful wood traders, each driven by their own vested interests in the local forests.

More generally, this chapter has brought into relief the eminently ambivalent position of the rank-and-file post-Colbertian forestry officer, caught between an unsupportive state hierarchy and the local, social and political, realities in which he operated. Modest incomes, limited promotion opportunities and low esteem for his professional status drove this royal agent to develop alternative strategies, which would help him maintain his place among a small-town bourgeoisie characterised by their education, comfortable wealth levels and conspicuous consumption. While this prosopographical survey might point to an uncomfortable situation for the officer, there was no sign of a growing discontent with the monarchy, perhaps in the way of *présidial* magistrates towards the end of the century. Disillusioned with the devalorisation of the *présidial* office, their company engaged into a desperate attempt at rehabilitation, leading to increasingly acrimonious exchanges with the government.⁴⁸⁴ Foresters, on the other hand, did not benefit from a corporate structure, which could have supported a common defense of their interests.

This lack of sense of a collective identity might have led forestry officers to rely on individual solutions, based on the resources offered by their direct local environment: a mix of judicious alliances with members of local social elites, honorary or paid municipal functions, and the royal office itself. In Quillan, it was the close connection of the foresters with a handful of successful legal and merchant families, which allowed them to overcome the limitations of their office. This argument helps to go beyond the classic crown-town dichotomy. In this interpretation, the ‘intrusion’ of royal structures into smaller towns (which also includes the occasional more forceful intervention such as a *Réformation forestière*) was not a predatory move, but a contribution to urban political stability. This assumption of harmonious integration of royal and local structures should however be counterbalanced by the factors of factionalism and strife it inevitably generates. In this sense, the history of early modern forestry administration offers much scope for future research in urban history. Analysis of forestry sources covering the last decades of the century would especially help to better understand the evolution of the relationship of France’s small towns with the monarchy on the eve of the Revolution.

⁴⁸⁴ Meyzie, *Les illusions perdues*, 347-368.

The officers' relationship with wood merchants is significant in another sense. The close, statutory collaboration of forestry agents with local commercial agents was a rational policy choice: it ensured optimal conditions for the management and control of the local forests, and a profitable and smooth sales process for the demesne. On the other hand, monarchical governments were aware of the inherent risk of collusion, administrative corruption, and negligent professional practice it entailed, but considered it as a tolerable compromise. When the threshold of tolerance was breached, they were forced to respond in a more forceful, publicly visible way. The nature of this response, the focus of our final chapter, confirms the notion of the fragile basis of royal authority in the provinces. Contrary however to a Manichean perception of outright 'failure' of Colbert's reforms, it points to a decentralised and more supple approach to forestry, which might have been the best possible way for eighteenth-century governments to grapple with the systemic inconsistencies introduced by the Colbertian regime.

CHAPTER FOUR

FORESTRY FRAUDSTERS AND THEIR JUDGES

Having described the social and professional profiles of Quillan's forestry officers, I will now turn to the reality and the limits of their administrative authority, in the context of the pervasive culture of fraud and professional malpractice in which they operated. To many contemporary observers and subsequent historians, forestry, fraud, negligence, and collusion seemed made for each other. Already in 1597 Sully had condemned "la négligence ou connivence d'aucuns de nos officiers, et effrénée licence et impunité d'aucuns de nos sujets," [telles que] "nos forêts sont presque entièrement ruinées."⁴⁸⁵ For Charles Colbert de Croissy, commissioned by his brother Jean-Baptiste as *commissaire de réformation*, "[L]es officiers de la Table de Marbre du Palais à Paris [...] demeurent dans un assoupissement bien blâmable pendant que les officiers des provinces, sur lesquels lesdits de la Table de Marbre [...] devraient veiller comme sur les plus grands ennemis des

⁴⁸⁵ Quoted in Marcel Marion, *Dictionnaire des institutions de la France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris, 1923), article 'Eaux-et-Forêts', 193.

forêts, les dégradent et les ruinent, la plupart n'ayant traité de leur charge que pour cette fin.”⁴⁸⁶ In 1703, Louis de Bernage, *intendant* of Franche-Comté, complained that in the *maîtrise* of Gray there was not one officer “à qui on ne puisse reprocher peu d’habileté et beaucoup de négligence.”⁴⁸⁷ At the start of Louis XVI’s reign, *grand-maître* Louis Desjobert expressed his dismay at the disputes, negligence and outright fraud he observed in the *maîtrises* of Compiègne. In one case, an officer had encouraged an ecclesiastic to fell timber without authorisation: “Coupez toujours, vous serez condamné à une amende, mais vous en aurez ensuite décharge.”⁴⁸⁸ For Desjobert, the problem was universal. “[L]e mal est général, et il n’est pas de région qui n’en pâtisce.”⁴⁸⁹ As evidence of professional incompetence or ambiguous relations with fraudulent local actors accumulated on the desks of the Parisian ministerial bureaux, the notion of ‘the venal-hence-corrupt’ forestry officer consolidated into an enduring trope.

There is little doubt that, in practice, France’s forestry was steeped in a long tradition of flouting official regulations. For most historians, this was due to the officers’ exclusive focus on protecting their privileges and the profits from their office. Analysing this issue from the officer’s own perspective, however, provides a valuable corrective to what appears as a tentacular, foreordained and incurable phenomenon. Based on the particular case of Quillan, the following chapter will focus on practices of ordinary provincial officers, situated half-way between the ideal of the perfect Christian magistrate and the downright rogue “officier-larron.”⁴⁹⁰

If we consider corruption in forestry and official responses to it as one broad and interlinked system, two distinct scenarios can be identified: ordinary practice, and *Réformation* periods. Ordinary times were characterised by a ubiquitous culture of low-level malpractice, fraud, and ‘minor’ infringements of the regulations, which usually involved some form of ‘arrangement’ between *maîtrise* officers with other forestry actors, village *consuls*, land owners, or wood merchants. It appears that this general situation was tacitly tolerated by the higher forestry authorities, the *grands-maîtres* and the *Contrôle Général*. This relatively stable, consensual state of affairs could come to an abrupt end,

⁴⁸⁶ Colbert de Croissy, *rapport au Roi sur les forêts de Picardie (1666)*, quoted in Devèze, *La grande réformation*, 27.

⁴⁸⁷ Gresset, *L’introduction de la vénalité*, 154.

⁴⁸⁸ Desjobert, *Un grand maître*, 39.

⁴⁸⁹ Id., 35.

⁴⁹⁰ The expression refers to the fortieth ‘emblem’, “Ung gros larron tache d’avoir office...”, by Guillaume de la Perrière, *Théâtre des bons engins...* (ed.1536).

however, when a certain threshold of tolerance was reached. At that point, the *Contrôle* intervened more forcefully by launching a special operation, a *Réformation Forestière*.

The structure of this chapter reflects these two tiers of ordinary and *Réformation* conjuncture. After a survey of day-to-day practices, the focus will shift onto the *Réformation* of Quillan (1736 to 1745), centred on a small number of affairs and their intriguing ramifications. This part will reveal crucial asymmetries within forestry networks that go some way towards explaining the officers' professional attitudes and behaviour. In the third subsection, the perspective will shift again to examine the responses of the forestry institution. 'Forestry corruption' will be analysed from the purview of the officials who presided over the *Réformations*. Scrutiny of a selection of judicial documents – an accusatory *mémoire* by a former officer, interim reports and final judgments of the *Réformation* commissioners – will allow us to reconstruct the various facets of an official narrative of 'service discipline'.

Rule-bending in daily practice

A pragmatic approach to forestry rules

Given the volume, complexity, and at times inconsistency, of the regulations included in the five hundred articles of the 1669 *Ordonnance*, and the countless subsequent rulings that amended and expanded them, it would not be unreasonable to assume that, in daily practice, some of them could be ignored or circumvented. On closer inspection, it appears that this attitude was rooted in a strong sense of pragmatism. In larger districts the statutory schedule of inspection visits could be unrealistic. As a result, “la plupart des *maîtres particuliers* et *garde-marteaux* ne font pas les visites générales ordonnées par l'Ordonnance du mois d'Aoust 1669, ou en dressent des procès-verbaux sans sortir de leurs maisons.”⁴⁹¹ Similarly unworkable was the obligation for the *garde-marteau* to perform his tagging operations only in the presence of two other officers. It would have been difficult for three officers to reconcile this fieldwork obligation with their other office-based tasks.

⁴⁹¹ AN, ADIV, 9, art. XLII, preamble of the 'Edit du Roy portant règlement sur les amendes des Eaux et Forests'.

Furthermore, in close-knit social microcosms like Quillan where officers had been inter-related for generations, the *grand-maître* used his discretionary powers to circumvent incompatibility rules regarding kinship bonds within a *maîtrise*, reiterated to no effect in successive ordinances. An equally lax attitude was apparent when it came to the exclusion of *adjudicataires* who were relatives of *maîtrise* officers, a precaution against price fixing already formulated in the Brunoy ordonnance of 1346. Here too, sales records testify that this exclusion rule was frequently by-passed to avoid jeopardising the sales. When the non-observance of this clause was included as part of a prosecution case, the defense argument invoked the small number of merchants able to bid. “Monsr. de Froidour, [...] par nécessité pour faire valoir lesd.ventes fut obligé d’admettre à icelles les parens des officiers, ce que Messieurs les Grands-Maistres ont fait du depuis.”⁴⁹² Based on this authoritative precedent, *grand-maître* Claude Anceau presiding the Quillan sales in 1723 authorised Claude Amiel, Henri Pinet Laprade and Estienne Espezel to use aliases, so that they could take part in the auction notwithstanding their parentage with some of the officers. This allowed these important bidders to push wood prices up, and the *grand-maître* to show good sales results.⁴⁹³

Another frequent source of non-compliance was the statutory prohibition of forestry officers to engage in trading activities, another clause on which successive rulings had insisted time and again without much effect. In the 1650s and 1660s, father and son Pierre and Antoine Cachulet were openly trading wood and operating a sawmill on the Aude, while serving as *garde-marteau* at the *maîtrise*.⁴⁹⁴ The *Réformation* tribunal officially deposed Pierre Cachulet for this offense, but he continued to appear in the personnel rolls until his son took over in 1675. Sixty years later, the situation had not much changed. In 1733, *greffier* Jean Roillet personally financed a two-man wood trading company organised by his son Jean-Pierre, who also acted as part-time *greffier* for the *maîtrise*. This evident breach of regulations did not seem to attract any negative attention.⁴⁹⁵ Between forestry and commerce, the boundaries remained porous.

⁴⁹² ADHG, 8B509, 4B4C, no.10, ‘Audition du 24 May 1701’.

⁴⁹³ ADAD, 63C37, f.9v., ‘Ventes et Adjudications (1723)’.

⁴⁹⁴ ADHG, 8B025, f.461-462v, ‘Jugement 2 mai 1670’.

⁴⁹⁵ ADAD, 3E13305, f.220, ‘Registre notarial, Me Laran, août 1742’.

Less benign was this porosity when it involved abuse of power and complicity with fraudulent merchants. The high degree of personal and professional promiscuity between officers and merchants has already been highlighted in chapter three. As they shared the same operational spaces, the two groups had much opportunity to use their respective, complementary and empowering assets to also engage in activities at the margins of legality. This more serious form of ‘administrative corruption’ has long been recognised by the crown. In his edict of 1597, Henri IV deplored the great *abus* committed in the royal forests by officers, who were “le plus souvent sous noms empruntez les vrais marchands ou leurs parens, amis et associez...”⁴⁹⁶ Similarly, the 1669 *Ordonnance* enjoined the *grands-mâîtres* to verify whether “les Officiers des Maitrises ont remis, dissimulé, ou trop légèrement condamné les Marchands pour abus & malversations par eux commises.”⁴⁹⁷ The fact that practices like these could go on for decades unnoticed, once again, demonstrates that the legislative tool was of little effect for these ordinary cases. It took the *Réformation* of 1736 to identify them and declare them liable to prosecution. From these examples, we can deduce the existence of a vast grey zone of commonly accepted norms and unwritten conventions, based on the widely accepted general principle that, in forestry, practice *could* supersede law.

This situation poses the question of the response of the regional *grands-mâîtres*, the officers’ immediate superiors. The *Ordonnance* gave them clear disciplinary powers over non-compliant officers: “[P]rocéderont contre les Officiers qu’ils trouveront en faute, par informations, décrets, saisies & arrêts de leurs personnes & de leurs gages.”⁴⁹⁸ In reality, serious disciplinary measures of that kind were relatively rare, especially if compared with the frequent actions of *grands-mâîtres* concerning the *gardes*, who were under their direct jurisdiction, and could be revoked at will without any possibility of appeal. A cursory survey of *maîtrise* officer cases brought to the *Table de Marbre* of Toulouse between 1676 and 1745 suggests that appeals to the higher courts regarding more serious officer misconduct were uncommon. Out of all the Quillan cases treated at that appeal court

⁴⁹⁶ F.A. Isambert et A.H. Taillandier, *Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises*, 29 vols, (Paris, 1821-1833), vol. XV, 155.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ordonnance* 1669, Titre III, art xv.

⁴⁹⁸ *Id.*, Titre III, art.v.

between 1676 and 1736, only two involved forestry officers as defendants.⁴⁹⁹ In 1678, *lieutenant* Jean Besset was fined and removed from office for multiple “*prévarications*,” including collusion with merchants and embezzlement.⁵⁰⁰ Half a century later, for the same charges, *maître particulier* Louis Rouzaud suffered a similar fate.

As Jean-Claude Waquet pointed out, *grand-maître* involvement with contentious matters of the *maîtrises* was a delicate affair. It had the uncanny potential to lead to unintended, far-reaching consequences. Appeals against decisions of the *grand-maître* might reach the *Parlement* via the *Table de Marbre*, two institutions with notoriously little *Eaux-et-Forêts* sympathies. Furthermore, pronouncing a suspension from office was to be carefully considered, as the *grand-maître* could not always rely on support from the *Conseil*. When the *grand-maître* of Alençon attempted to remove the *maître particulier* of Domfront, who was also *bailli* of Alençon and former *lieutenant des maréchaux*, the *Conseil* turned against him and demanded a repayment of 10,000 livres damage and interest.⁵⁰¹ Conversely, *maîtrise* officers tried to avoid intervention by their superior, so that many conflicts (such as the dispute described in the opening example) never left the four walls of the *maîtrise*. In Toulouse, when the *grand-maître* toured the *maîtrises* to preside over their auctions, he appeared more focused on that activity and routine bureaucratic work than on checking the registers for potential irregularities. In Senlis, the otherwise diligent *grand-maître* decided to cancel an inspection visit to a particularly quarrel-ridden *maîtrise*, arguing that he would have “trop d’embarras avec des gens si peu unis entre eux.”⁵⁰²

The responses of the *grands-mâtres* faced with cases of officers at fault are also revealing in another, more immediate way. Weighing into their decision whether or not to engage into a formal procedure against an officer was also the prospect of boosting the fine budget of the *Grande Maîtrise*. Disciplinary cases represented an opportunity for additional revenue, but it had to be a calculated risk. In the Besset and Rouzaud cases cited above, the fines (together with the additional costs of the procedure which could be enormous) were secured by personal property or by the office. Jean Besset, one of four siblings, had his share of the family estate, together with the rights associated with his office, immediately

⁴⁹⁹ ADHG, 8B507-526, contains nineteen dossiers regarding all Quillan cases brought to the *Table de Marbre* between 1676 and 1745.

⁵⁰⁰ ADHG, 8B508. Most of this long dossier is concerned with this affair.

⁵⁰¹ Waquet, *Les Grands Maîtres*, 221.

⁵⁰² Desjobert, *Un grand maître*, 38.

seized as a security.⁵⁰³ The proceeds of the family office which Antoinette Pepratx had sold to Pierre Marsol in 1734 had been frozen, which secured payment of her large fine of 1744. Without her office, the widow would most probably have been insolvent, incurring a net loss for the crown.

Also revealing is the personal context in which these two cases occurred. While the formal charges were of a professional nature, both affairs were deeply tangled up in acute personal crises. Both hinted at the existence of familial strife, aggravated by the *grand-maître's* personal bias. In 1678, *lieutenant* Jean Besset had been denounced by his brother François because of his liaison with a “femme de mauvaise vie” from Montpellier, whom he wanted to marry against the wishes of his family. His brother-in-law Aymé Riquier, whom he called his ‘mortal enemy’, was *receveur general* in Toulouse and a *protégé* of *grand-maître* Froidour. The latter, siding with François Besset, included these damaging personal details as part of his official report.⁵⁰⁴ Similarly, Louis Rouzaud alleged that his prosecution and dismissal in 1732 had been caused by a personal grudge against him and his family by *procureur du roi* Louis Terrisse. During his four-year stint as *maître particulier* of Quillan, he had committed a number of “prévarications” in league with his maternal uncle Bernard Pepratx. When Terrisse alerted the *grand-maître* to the pair’s fraudulent undertakings, he sentenced Rouzaud to a fine of 4,000 livres to the crown, and to sell the family office. For his part in the fraud, Bernard Pepratx was fined 9,000 livres.⁵⁰⁵ For Louis Rouzaud, his mother, and the whole Rouzaud-Pepatrax family, this sentence was as much a financial disaster as a public humiliation. Vowing vengeance, the family launched a denunciation campaign against the officers and the *grand-maître*. Bernard Pepratx went to Paris in the hope of overturning the sentence, bearing a series of accusatory letters and *mémoires* compiled by his nephew. Not only was he unsuccessful, but his initiative alerted the *Conseil* to the “abus considérables” which had bedevilled the functioning of the Quillan unit since the death of Jean Rouzaud in 1719.

During the three years following Rouzaud’s sentence, the affair escalated into an acrimonious, public exchange of personal and legal threats. After the *procureur du roi* Louis Terrisse lodged a formal complaint to the *grand-maître* because of “injure et diffamations contre eux tous [officers] par le sieur Rouzeaud,” the subsequent testimony of

⁵⁰³ ADAD, 63C5, f.50-52, ‘Ordonnance de Froidour concernant les droits du Sr Besset, 17 janvier 1678’.

⁵⁰⁴ ADAD, 63C5, f.9, ‘Procès-verbal de visite à Quillan, Louis de Froidour, 9 janvier 1678’.

⁵⁰⁵ ADH, C1255, pièce 273, ‘Lettre du Sr. Anceau de Lavelanet, 31 juillet 1736’.

eleven witnesses confirmed the tensions and high emotional charge that surrounded this affair. One of them testified that Louis Rouzaud had publicly insulted the *grand-maître* and his secretary Thimotée Boulanger, whom he called his “âme damnée.” In exchange for certain “complaisances et [...] prévarications au profit dudit archevêque [of Narbonne] et à l’occasion des forêts qu’il a limitrophes de celles du roi,” Boulanger had, allegedly, received “la députation du pays de Razès aux Etats de la province du Languedoc et une bourse de jetons valant 800 livres.”⁵⁰⁶ Here we find echoes of the tentacular web of relations which linked higher forestry officers to influential, forest-owning dignitaries, magnified by public rumour and personal spite.⁵⁰⁷ After three years of strife compounded by Rouzaud’s accusatory *mémoires* to the *contrôleur général*, on 29 May 1736 the *Conseil* took the decisive step of launching a wholesale *Réformation* in that *maîtrise*. Interestingly, the trigger for this decision had not been an official inquiry or some other formal procedure, but the actions of a disgruntled private individual who had left the institution in disgrace. According to a commonly-held perception, also shared by the commissioners, “c’est le sieur Rouzaud cydevant maître particulier de cette maîtrise et le Sieur Pepratx du lieu de Caudiès son oncle qui sont les auteurs de tous ces mémoires qui ont donné lieu à la Refformation.”⁵⁰⁸

Fundamentally, this example demonstrates the potential for personal and emotional factors, situated at the micro-historical level of an individual family, to destabilise the whole system, and trigger an operation, which could affect anyone, including the *grand-maître*. As the commissioners started sifting through the registers, *grand-maître* Claude Anceau felt the need to preempt accusations and consolidate his own position. In one long *mémoire*, he justified his conduct on the grounds of age and ill-health, due to his earlier military career.⁵⁰⁹ Crucially, he also used personal details to discredit Rouzaud, highlighting the “attitude escandaleuse” of this *maître particulier* “qui ne songea plus qu’à

⁵⁰⁶ de Sailly, ‘Les conséquences d’une adjudication à long terme’, *Revue des Eaux et Forêts*, 36 (1897), pp. 129-139; 166-174, 135. The ‘inventaire des actes’ of Espezel’s judgement of 17 July 1747 (ADAD, 63C63/2, pièce 61) provides a helpful summary of this affair.

⁵⁰⁷ Details of this affair can be read in de Sailly, ‘Les conséquences’, (1897).

⁵⁰⁸ ADH, C1255, f.262, ‘Lettre des officiers de la maîtrise de Quillan à ‘Monseigneur’ (probably intendant des finances Taschereau de Baudry), 4 mars 1737’.

⁵⁰⁹ ADH, C1255, f.273-275, ‘Mémoire du Sr. Anceau de Lavelanet, n.d., but probably 1736’. Claude Anceau de Lavelanet (born 1662) started as *mousquetaire* in the king’s first company, then *cornette* in regiment Dauphin-étranger. In 1691, he participated in the siege of Mons, where he received a serious injury, followed by a second one in 1693. A “family affair” forced him to leave the military. He acquired the *grand-maître* office in 1699 but *contrôleur général* Pontchartrain allowed him to combine military service and forestry until 1705.

des habits, qu'au jeu, à des maistresses.”⁵¹⁰ By the 1730s, the combination of formal business and personal factors was still a powerful driver of official forestry politics.

In sum, what emerges from this survey is very much at odds with official rhetoric, purporting to establish a rigorous “bonne police” of forestry practice. It can be argued that the apparent inability of the central authorities to curb entrenched practices in day-to-day forestry work masked in fact an unwillingness to do so, because it ultimately suited them. Case studies from other parts of the country’s justice system suggest the existence of a similar rationale. In his example of two eighteenth-century *prévôts* from Lorraine, Hervé Piant observed the reticence of the higher judiciary to respond and sanction their misconduct appropriately.⁵¹¹ Piant explained this hesitancy in terms of the *esprit de corps* that bound the judicial system together, and the need to avoid inflicting moral damage upon the whole institution. “[R]econnaître par un procès voire une sanction publics qu’il existe des juges malhonnêtes, c’est éclabousser l’ensemble du corps.”⁵¹² In my sources however, I have not come across any indication that *grands-mâîtres* were much moved by such generous *Eaux-et-Forêts* solidarity. From their perspective, the benefits to be had from tolerating regular minor infringements of the rules were of a less ideological nature. Their cautious approach to minor acts of non-compliance safeguarded the smooth functioning of the *maîtrise*, while currying favour among a useful merchant clientèle which ensured that a steady revenue from the royal forests trickled into the crown’s coffers. Higher up the line of command, the rarity of *Conseil* involvement with cases at the lower end of the hierarchy suggests a desire to leave them at the discretion of the regional *grand-maître*. Fundamentally, this disconnection between the central and the regional decision-making spheres kept most low-priority, ordinary affairs contained within the confines of the province. It left *maîtrise* officers with a large autonomy in the day-to-day conduct of forestry affairs, while *grands-mâîtres* could choose to ignore minor breaches of the law. If they decided to get involved, the procedures they followed could be tainted by a certain degree of arbitrariness, personal affinity and partisanship on their part.

This convenient, consensual situation could end abruptly, however, when a certain threshold was reached, and the interests and authority of the king were too openly defied.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid., 274r.

⁵¹¹ Hervé Piant, ‘Pour l’honneur de la magistrature: honnêteté et corruption des magistrats dans la justice d’ancien régime: deux exemples lorrains au XVIIIe siècle’, in: Follain, *Contrôler et punir*, pp. 231-251.

⁵¹² Id., 247.

This situation demanded that the *Conseil* respond in a cogent and noticeable way, calling for a *Réformation Forestière*.

Crossing the threshold: *Réformations Forestières*

A multi-faceted operation

Already documented for the fourteenth century, *Réformations Forestières* were seen as “manifestations d’énergie qui venaient de temps à autre secouer l’apathie ou la négligence de l’administration, les égoïsmes locaux et les prétentions seigneuriales. ”⁵¹³ They punctuated the cyclical schema observed throughout the long history of forestry: financial demands arising from war led to the proliferation of offices; the resulting mismanagement and fraud led to forest degradation and high wood prices; this perceived “wood crisis” induced governments to launch a *Réformation Forestière*, review legislation, and reduce office numbers, until a new conflict spun the wheel again.⁵¹⁴

After Colbert’s national operation of the 1660s, *Réformations Forestières* continued to appear sporadically right until the 1780s, with varying emphasis on either penal or technical aspects. Without claiming to be exhaustive, Waquet listed some of these secondary operations between 1686 and 1788, bringing them into a wider context.⁵¹⁵ After Colbert’s momentous *Réformation* activity followed a period of quiet, coinciding with the difficult circumstances of the second half of Louis XIV’s reign. The Regency initiated a new spate of *Réformations* (Quillan among them) in several provinces. Some of these early eighteenth-century operations could be large in scale, as those carried out in Bourgogne or in the Lyonnais. Between 1745 and the advent of Louis XVI in 1775, governmental focus was diverted towards more important matters, religious strife, wars, and economic reforms. A final flurry of *Réformations* occurred in the final years before the Revolution, against the backdrop of a particularly high-profile forestry scandal, the Guyon de Frémont affair, *grand-maître* of Caen. As outlined in chapter one, scholarly attention has narrowly focused on Colbert’s *Grandes Réformations* because of their ambitious scope, and immediate success, but it disregarded these less conspicuous, smaller-scale interventions. Analysing the judicial facet of one of these operations of the 1730s, as is proposed in this chapter,

⁵¹³ Devèze, *Une admirable réforme*, 245.

⁵¹⁴ This cycle is impressively described in Devèze’s survey of sixteenth-century forestry, *La vie de la forêt française au XVIe siècle*.

⁵¹⁵ Waquet, *Les Grands Maîtres*, 253-262.

aims to redress this bias, and provide new insights into the underlying strategies and political motives of Fleury's government in its response to malpractice in the forestry service.

Réformations Forestières were a multi-faceted set of operations, aimed at refurbishing parts of the monarchical administration that had evidently fallen in disarray. They could range from a modest operation covering a single forest or one specific object like forges or rivers, all the way to Colbert's nationwide, twenty-year long enterprise. They addressed a wide range of administrative and technical issues, but always included a judicial component, aimed at identifying and prosecuting all "auteurs, complices & adherans" of present and past misdeeds.⁵¹⁶ In general, *Réformations* followed four major operational lines, the first three occurring in succession: a comprehensive audit of the *maîtrise's* past administration, a physical survey of all royal and communal forests in the district, followed by elaborating a new prescriptive set of management plans. The judicial leg of the mission ran along this general agenda because a *Réformation* was also a *tribunal d'exception*. In their capacity as judges, the *commissaires de Réformation* pursued as many cases as possible of non-compliance with forest law. This included all users and owners of the forests in the district regardless of their 'qualité', the merchants, and the forestry officers themselves, including the *grand-maître*. The operation ceased after all final judgements had been pronounced, new *ordonnances* issued, and final reports sent to the *maîtrise*, the regional *Table de Marbre*, and the *Contrôle Général*. This final step formally established a new prescriptive framework for the forthcoming management of all the forests and waterways in the district.

Directing these various operations was a specially appointed, well-remunerated head commissioner, equipped with wide executive powers and superior jurisdiction.⁵¹⁷ He was in principle directly answerable to the *contrôleur général*, but his main interlocutor was the *intendant des finances* with the "Forêts" in his portfolio. The lead commissioner, usually a regional intendant, was helped by a small group of handpicked, subdelegated legal professionals from nearby courts. The regional *grand-maître* could also be involved if approved by the *contrôleur général*. These *commissaires de Réformation* had wide-ranging powers. They had free rein to instruct and prosecute all forms of "abus, délits et

⁵¹⁶ ADH, C1255, f.93, 'Arrêt du Conseil d'Etat du Roy 29 May 1736 qui ordonne la Réformation des Bois de la Maitrise de Quillan'.

⁵¹⁷ A lead commissioner could receive over 6,000 livres for six months (this included his secretary's wage).

malversations” perpetrated by either “officiers; [...] marchands; [...] délinquants; et [...] usagers ou coustumiers.”⁵¹⁸ Their reach extended across all social categories of forest users and owners, regardless of social status. Their judgments were final, with all other courts or judges expressly prohibited from intervening. Crucially, under a *Réformation*, which legally derived from a commission by the *conseil*, appeals were all evoked directly to it. This allowed the judges to by-pass the all too familiar obstruction and dilatory *chicanes* of the sovereign courts.

The commissioners had the power to rule over matters that were vital to the livelihoods of individuals and communities, such as access and customary rights in royal forests, and they resolved *paréage* and boundary disputes with influential private owners. On the local and regional scene, the arrival of the team of commissioners signified therefore an abrupt disturbance of ordinary routines. Potentially, their actions and decisions could affect almost anyone in the district. In the Pyrenean region imbued with a fierce sense of autonomy and opposition to interventions from the political centre, a *Réformation* could be a threat to social peace. Expensive and potentially destabilising, these operations could not be initiated lightly. Their launch signalled that a point of rupture had been reached. It indicated that the management and control of the forests could no longer be entrusted to dishonest, irresponsible officers of a local *maîtrise*, and that the leadership qualities of the regional *grand-maître* were open to doubt. The purge of the forestry personnel, then, was a crucial part of the *Réformation*. In Froidour’s words, “[L]a fin principale de la Réformation estant de restablir les forests, ce seroit pescher contre la prudence et bonne oeconomie d’en confier davantage la conservation à des mauvais officiers, pourquoy son application principale sera de faire la distinction des bons d’avec ceux qu’il jugera incapables de servir, lesquels il privera de leurs charges, les interdira où obligera d’en disposer dans un temps lequel passé le Roy y pourvoira.”⁵¹⁹ In this sense, Quillan was a case in point.

Quillan’s second Réformation

Sixty-five years after the *maîtrise particulière* of Quillan was formally established as part of Colbert’s forestry reforms, *contrôleur général* Orry responded to alarming reports of serious dysfunctions in that *maîtrise* by ordering a second intervention in that small, forest-

⁵¹⁸ AN, KK952, f.1, ‘Mémoire pour la réformation’.

⁵¹⁹ Id., 28.

rich Pyrenean district.⁵²⁰ This intervention occurred during the active years of Louis XV's cardinal-minister Fleury, whose Languedocian origins and special interest for commerce might suggest that he had also a particular interest in the region's affairs.⁵²¹ Operations on the ground were to be overseen by the Languedoc *intendant*, Louis-Basile Bernage de Saint Maurice, committed as principal commissioner, under the aegis of Taschereau de Baudry, since 1722 the *intendant des finances* responsible for '*domaines et bois*'. The all-important function of *procureur de Réformation* was allocated to Gabriel Pernet, a northerner, *procureur du roi* of the *maîtrise particulière* of Reims.⁵²² Jean de Rouquet, *avocat au parlement* in Toulouse, was committed as Bernage's direct *subdélégué*.⁵²³

Another *avocat* at the Toulouse *Parlement*, Jean-Louis Anceau de Lavelanet, was also called upon.⁵²⁴ He was the son and heir to the office of *grand-maître* Claude Anceau, seigneur de Lavelanet, who had held the Toulouse office for thirty-seven years.⁵²⁵ One short year after he received his *lettres de provision* (dated 26 July 1737), an *arrêt du Conseil*, "le Roy Sa Majesté y étant," ratified Jean-Louis Anceau's appointment as subdelegate to Bernage.⁵²⁶ The authorities had no objection to including the son of a *grand-maître* who was potentially implicated in the cases the commissioners would have to treat. De Bernage argued that "[L]e principal objet de la Réformation concernant l'avenir, le fils pourra toujours s'abstenir dans la recherche du passé des affaires particulières dans lesquelles son père se trouveroit personnellement intéressé."⁵²⁷ For judgments on more important cases, outside lawyers were called upon. the judgment of 25 May 1739 against the officers implicated in the Laprade case (detailed below), de Bernage was assisted by six lawyers of Montpellier, the president and *juge-mage* of the Montpellier *sénéchaussée*, its *lieutenants principal* and *particulier*, and three *avocats*.⁵²⁸ When Gabriel Pernet died in office in 1740, he was replaced as *procureur de Réformation* by Jean-Pierre Pitot, the *garde-marteau* of the *maîtrise particulière* of Montpellier, who had demonstrated much zeal and professional qualities as an accessory subdelegate. In 1743, Bernage was called to the post of *prevost des marchands* of Paris and was replaced as lead

⁵²⁰ AN, E2153, f.290, 'Arrêt du Conseil, 29 May 1736'.

⁵²¹ Cardinal de Fleury was born in Lodève (today's Hérault *département*).

⁵²² Ibid.

⁵²³ ADAD, 63C64, f.2v., 'Ordonnance de Mr. de Bernage, 13 aoust 1736'.

⁵²⁴ For a detailed analysis of the Anceau family office, see Coincy, 'Quelques précisions'.

⁵²⁵ Claude Anceau died on 13. September 1738.

⁵²⁶ ADAD, 63C64, f.4r., 'Arrêt du Conseil, 19 aoust 1738'.

⁵²⁷ ADH, C1255, f.104, 'Lettre Bernage à Mr. de Baudry, 28 mai 1738'.

⁵²⁸ ADAD, 63C75, 'Jugement 25 May 1739'.

commissioner by his successor at the *intendance* post, Jean Le Nain d'Asfeld. The Quillan operation was terminated under his watch.

When the commission started work in summer 1736, their initial source of information was Louis Rouzaud's *mémoires* and denunciations. For all their vagueness, personal aspects and emotional bias, these documents are also a precious source for our study. They allow us to create a crude typology of official misconduct in the service of the king for the early part of the reign of Louis XV. By his frequent allusions to officer-merchant complicity, Rouzaud raises the important question of the official response to that particular form of professional misdemeanour. Would the commissioners respond firmly by applying the strictures of the law, or err on the side of leniency and go along with what was considered as the inevitable collateral damage of coopting merchants in day-to-day forestry business? To give this question some depth, it will be illustrated by the 'Laprade case', one well-documented and particularly revealing example of connivance between unequal partners.

The Laprade case

The 'Laprade case' was a multi-layered, convoluted affair, which occupied the commissioners - and the public - for the best part of the decade after the start of the Quillan *Réformation*.⁵²⁹ It was sparked by a relatively minor instance of connivance between some of the officers of the *maîtrise* and one dominant wood merchant, Henri Pinet de Laprade, whose activities have been described above.⁵³⁰ At the *grandes adjudications* of 1723, Laprade had accumulated five separate multi-year bids, pledging in total 129,673 livres, payable in equal portions over the following ten years. His largest contract included the exploitation of 7,000 firs to be cut in the Gravas forest located in the remote Madrès Mountains.

In 1728, halfway through this merchant's contract, the *maîtrise* acquired a new *maître particulier* (Louis Rouzaud), a new *procureur du roi*, Louis Terrisse, and a new *garde-marteau*, Jean-Antoine Loubet. In October 1728, during one of their routine inspections, these officers also travelled to the Gravas forest with the *maîtrise*'s tagging hammer to authorise Laprade's allocated cuts for that year. The operation however produced a total count of 1,200 trees, which represented 589 in excess of Laprade's quota that year. The

⁵²⁹ A synthesis can be reconstructed from the *Arrêt du Conseil* of 12 April 1740 (ADH, C1257, pièce 158).

⁵³⁰ See p.174.

merchant protested his innocence, claiming that half of the trees were top-ends mistakenly taken for individual trees. When the commissioners took hold of this particular affair in 1736, they treated it as a matter of some importance because Rouzaud's *mémoire* had hinted at the fact that certain registers had been tampered with, a serious offense by all accounts. The register listing all *martelages* was normally compiled by the *greffier*, on the basis of the *garde-marteau*'s report. For the year 1728, it showed a figure of 611 trees against Laprade's name, which 'corrected' the original count of 1,200 trees. This inconsistency was interpreted by the *procureur* as intentional, a "diminution réfléchie et méditée [...] d'intelligence avec l'adjudicataire" [...] "pour favoriser l'adjudicataire au préjudice des intérêts du Roy."⁵³¹ Time worked against the investigators' search for physical evidence of the fraud itself, as with passing years most *martelage* marks on logs and stumps had faded away or were covered by vegetation. The alleged falsification of the register, however, had opened Pandora's box. Painsstaking scrutiny of the registers revealed that, year after year, the officers had authorised more trees than allocated in merchants' contracts.

The commissioners' inquiries took a new turn after they found evidence that, some time after the falsification affair of 1728, the cabinet housing the official documents and registers in one room of the *maîtrise* building - which was also Rouzaud's family home - had been forced open, and some documents removed. The remainder had been gathered up and stored in a locked chest kept at the *greffier*'s home. The *garde-marteau*'s original *martelage* register of 1728 was not among them. After their first hearings of 1737, the commissioners spent the following six years attempting to establish the respective responsibilities of the four officers deemed most implicated in this affair: former *maître particulier* Louis Rouzaud, *garde-marteau* Jean-Antoine Loubet, *procureur du roi* Louis Terrisse. They also included *greffier* Jean Roillet who had accompanied the officers in the Gravas forest and was responsible for keeping the registers in order. The three main charges pending against these officers included collusion with a merchant, abusive use of the forestry hammer, and falsification of an official document. When the new set of judges and experts arrived on the scene in 1741 after Pernet's death in office, they overturned the results reached so far, and started procedures anew. They multiplied witness hearings, confrontations, and expensive technical expertises, all of which prolonged the legal embarrassment of the four officer defendants until final sentence was reached in 1744.⁵³²

⁵³¹ ADH, C1257, 'Interrogatoire Roillet, 17 avril 1744'.

⁵³² Details of the outcome below, p 216-7.

Meanwhile, Henri Pinet Laprade, the merchant whose comparatively minor fraud had been the original trigger of this convoluted case, was in trouble too. By 1733, the last year of his ambitious ten-year contract, he had only been able to exploit half of it, and accumulated substantial payment arrears, suggesting that he had badly misjudged the market. One of Laprade's creditors, Sr de Chirac, *capitoul* of Toulouse, requested that parts of his estate be seized in sequester.⁵³³ Facing insolvency, he sent his nephew – none other than *garde-marteau* Jean-Antoine Loubet – to Paris with a plea for moderation for these arrears, and full release from the remaining, still standing, portion of his contract. This case of insolvency also involved the responsibility of the treasurers. Jean-Antoine Cachoulet, the *receveur particulier* of the Quillan maîtrise, had omitted to request sufficient caution money from the merchant, which was a serious mistake, given the amounts involved. Laprade's request was at first turned down, but a compromise solution was reached after Laprade made a lumpsum payment of 55,549 livres. The *Conseil*, “par grâce et sans tirer à conséquence,” freed Laprade from the part of his contract which had not yet been marked as ‘authorised’ by the officers, and reduced payment for the trees already marked to his name to 24,000 livres. This amount was to be shared “solidairement” between Laprade, all the involved officers (or their heirs), and the *receveur particulier*.⁵³⁴ Assuming an equal share, Laprade's final payment was thus reduced to just 6,000 livres.

To complement this account and provide the personal and social context in which the affair unfolded, it will be useful to include some relevant biographical details regarding the denunciator, Louis Rouzaud, and his mother Antoinette Pepratx, the legal owner of the *maître particulier* office.

Kinship loyalties

When *maître particulier* Jean Rouzaud died in 1719, his widow Antoinette Pepratx, aged forty-one, was charged with nine children under the age of eighteen. As noted in the preceding chapter, the returns from the family office she inherited were hardly sufficient to sustain the lifestyle expected from a member of the town elite. During the minority of her eldest son Louis, her brother-in-law Joseph Rouzaud Mourençy was acting *maître particulier* from his home in Lavelanet, while she remained living gratuitously in the

⁵³³ ADHG, 8B507, n.p., ‘Procès-verbal de Jacques de Peyre, président et juge-mage au présidial de Limoux, 25 septembre 1734’.

⁵³⁴ ADH, C1257, pièce158, 7, ‘Extrait des registres du Conseil d’Etat, 12 avril 1740’.

Maison Royale with her family. With the help of her younger brother Bernard Pepratx, Antoinette soon turned to fraud and wood theft.⁵³⁵ She was supported in all her endeavours, legal and illegal, by a disparate group of allies, including a local noble, Mr de Cessales, various forest wardens and loggers of surrounding villages, the *fermier* of a sawmill on the Aude, as well as Quillan's apothecary, Louis Rouch. One of the cases picked up by the commissioners also mentioned a fruitful association with Etienne Espezel, a prominent wood merchant rival of the Pinet clan.⁵³⁶ As official *séquestre*, Espezel had stored the *bois de délit* found on the widow's premises in his yard. Some years later, any mention of the stolen wood had vanished from the registers, and the merchant sold it for the benefit of the widow - and no doubt also his own.

More unexpected and thoughtprovoking than these ordinary instances of connivance and fraud was the undeniable personal leverage that Antoinette Pepratx, despite her precarious financial situation, was able to exert on the officers of the *maîtrise* and former colleagues of her late husband. This emerged from the hearings conducted by the commissioners in 1737. One of them referred to the incident of 1721 described at the start of chapter one, which unfolded after the then *lieutenant* André Boire and *procureur* Pinet Brezilhou had discovered a suspicious timber load at the Quillan port, finding no merchant countermark besides the tag from the *garde-marteau's* royal seal. When they challenged *garde-marteau* Etienne Loubet for an explanation, he reacted defensively, and with violence. He then admitted that he had been asked to hide this unmarked load away from the *procureur's* scrutiny, and conceded that he had acted in this way because of the "fortes sollicitations" of Antoinette Pepratx. A short time after this incident, the same officers standing in the town square overheard the widow, standing at her doorstep, boasting that she had 'good guarantees' for her actions: "j'y ay fait couper mais en bonnes enseignes."⁵³⁷ Even more telling is *procureur* Pinet Brezilhou's statement about that incident. Asked why, having witnessed the widow's words, he did not follow the case up, he replied that he had felt obliged "de se retirer, ne voulant pas se compromettre avec une femme."⁵³⁸ These few elements do not allow us to get a conclusive explanation for the widow's special

⁵³⁵ Bernard Pepratx was described as wood merchant, and 'bourgeois' of Couiza (ten kms north-east of Quillan). He was fined 9,090 livres in 1733 for fraud and 'prévarications', and banished from taking part in future wood sales. A record of 1737 titles him as "écuyer auprès de Mr D'Angervillier, ministre de la guerre."

⁵³⁶ Etienne Espezel was involved in another high-profile *Réformation* case, accused of exploitation fraud on a massive scale. See de Saily, 'Les Conséquences d'une Adjudication'.

⁵³⁷ ADH, C1255, 'Audition André Boire, 26 octobre 1737'.

⁵³⁸ Id., 'Audition Pinet Brezilhou, 25 octobre 1735'.

ascendancy suggested by these testimonies. Suffice, for the purpose of this thesis, to acknowledge the evident limitations to the authority of royal officers that could be imposed by individuals like Antoinette Pepratx.

To comply with the *grand-maître's* sentence of 1732, Antoinette Pepratx sold the family office for 21,000 livres, but she never received the full amount of that sale. She fought a ten-year long legal battle to retrieve at least some of the money which had been seized as a security for her son's fines, and later for her own case, as she faced further prosecution by the *Réformation* judges for charges committed in the 1720s.⁵³⁹ When the final sentence was pronounced in 1744, the combined fine for herself and her son reduced the original price of the office by approximately 7,000 livres. The family had lost one-third of the value of the family office.

This example demonstrates the crucial influence of kinship loyalties and other personal factors in matters concerning the exploitation, commercialisation, and control of the kingdom's forest resources. Taken together, all the elements of the case described here confirm the close and complex entanglement of interests around forests, connecting the crown with the interlocking interests of its provincial agents and members of the local society. Motives for practices that undermined the king's interest were reaching far into the personal sphere of all protagonists. The bonds that interlinked these protagonists were however far from neutral and equivalent. In Quillan, as the pressures of *Réformation* litigation mounted, questions of social prestige, economic resources, and political influence which differentiated interdependent and unequal actors turned into factors of dissent, which were not to the officers' advantage, nor to that of the crown.

Critical asymmetries

A comparison of two key players in the Laprade affair, wood merchant Henri Pinet Laprade, son of the town's *maire perpétuel*, and Jean-Antoine Loubet, scion of an established line of *garde-marteaux*, reveals that their close professional and personal collaboration masked their asymmetry in terms of local influence and economic power. The advantageous situation of the Pinet dynasty has already been demonstrated: a thriving

⁵³⁹ An intermediate summary of this affair in ADAD, 63C77, 'Le Nain, Ordonnance en réformation, 15 février 1744'; final judgement in ADAD, 63C63, 'Jugement Le Nain 6 novembre 1744'; and ADAD, 63C63, 'Jugement Le Nain, 21 septembre 1745'.

family business, patronage links with local nobility and Church dignitaries, and monopoly over a range of royal offices, mayor, *receveur particulier*, *garde-marteau* and *procureur du roi*. When in 1723 Henri Pinet Laprade started appearing in his own name in the sales listings, he could claim a prosperous legacy, based on a successful mix of wood trade and other commercial and financial activities, and a strategy of concentrating power by combining local political influence and royal office. As the new lead member of the family, Henri Pinet Laprade was best positioned to offer personal patronage and create obligations. This also included *maîtrise* officers, and notably his nephew, the young *garde-marteau* Jean-Antoine Loubet.

At first glance, the Loubets were not devoid of assets. They were a respected, well-established local family, with a long history of service to the town. Jean-Antoine Loubet's grandfather, Antoine Loubet, docteur-es-droits, bourgeois of Quillan, had been *lieutenant* of the Quillan *châtellenie*. His grandmother came from a local merchant family, the Laforges. The Loubets were among the few town residents registering their *armoiries* in 1695, evidence that they shared the same social ambitions as their fellow forestry officers and some prominent wood merchants like the Bertrands, Majorels or Pinets.⁵⁴⁰ When Jean-Antoine's father Etienne Loubet received the *garde-marteau* office in 1708 from his father-in-law Antoine Cachulet, he was already 49 years old. For him, this was an end-of-career move, which complemented his other activities as a small *rentier* and local moneylender.⁵⁴¹ In 1736, as the Laprade affair reached a first peak with the start of the *Réformation* investigations, Jean-Antoine Loubet married into the Bertrands, a family of wood merchants boasting a recently-acquired "de la Capelle" codicil to their name. His bride, Anne Bertrand, was also the niece of Etienne Espezel, who at the time of the marriage was himself heavily caught up in a lawsuit for fraud.

When Jean-Antoine Loubet assumed his office of *garde-marteau* in 1728, he could therefore also rely on certain personal credentials. On the other hand, as a twenty-year old applicant, he had to seek age dispensation. More problematically, one of the merchants he was due to 'control' as part of his duties was his uncle by alliance, Henry Pinet Laprade, who clearly towered above him in terms of age (he was 44), experience, and by the prestige and political influence of the whole Pinet sphere. The administrative authority that

⁵⁴⁰ See Table 16, p.162.

⁵⁴¹ ADAD, 3E13294, 'Registre notaire M.Roillet, 24 novembre 1732'.

the young *garde-marteau* could wield by dint of his office would have appeared slim against the tide of kinship loyalties he owed these influential relatives.

This personal dependency was significantly exacerbated when Henri Laprade fell on hard times, pressed by the debts he had accumulated during his multi-year exploitation in the forests of the Madrès Mountains. In 1732, he sent his *garde-marteau* nephew Jean-Antoine Loubet to Paris with a plea for moderation. In one printed document published in 1744 as a defense document in the case made against him by the *Réformations* judges, *greffier* Jean Roillet accused Jean-Antoine Loubet of having urged his *maîtrise* colleagues “à prévariquer en faveur de cet *Adjudicataire* [Laprade].” Roillet added that the *garde-marteau* had declared ‘in his own words’ that “il avait donné son âme au Diable pour le servir.”⁵⁴² As part of Roillet’s legal defense strategy, this extraordinary statement must be interpreted with caution, but it does make sense in the light of the fact that at the time of the alleged document alteration, the *garde-marteau* owed Henri Laprade 1,600 livres, by all accounts a vast sum for a young officer.⁵⁴³ Furthermore, Jean-Antoine Loubet knew that his other uncle, the *receveur particulier* Cachulet, would be accountable to the treasury of the large *reliquat* resulting from Laprade’s failed exploitation, a debt he himself, as presumptive heir of that office, would in time inherit.

It is important to avoid the pitfall of overstating the dichotomy between familial clientelism and allegiance to professional norms based on particular examples. On the other hand, the specifics of the Loubet-Laprade relationship, and the ongoing difficulties of the Rouzaud-Pepratx clan all demonstrate that at the lower rungs of the forestry institution, office holders, ill-supported by their superiors, had often no choice but to turn to better-endowed members of the local society who sat outside the royal system. Exacerbated by financial hardship, kinship obligations, and other forms of personal dependencies, office-holding foresters were driven to espouse at least some of the priorities and values linked to patrimony and familial honorability.

After this detailed investigation of the Laprade case from the point of view of the ‘perpetrators’, it is helpful to change perspective and approach the phenomenon of ‘forestry corruption’ from the purview of the authorities. Following the successive stages of the operation, three distinct and successive sets of documents will be analysed and

⁵⁴² ADH, C1257, f. 128, ‘Mémoire Roillet 1744, p.13’.

⁵⁴³ Ibid., p.4.

compared: the initial denunciations of Louis Rouzaud (1732-1733), the charges brought forward by the *Réformation* prosecutor Gabriel Pernet (1737), and the final sentences by the *Réformation* judges (1744). While the two first documents were copies of the compilations written by Rouzaud and Pernet, the actual sentences had to be collected from a number of registers.⁵⁴⁴ No claim can therefore be made that the list of these judgments is exhaustive. They nevertheless provide precious information about the attitudes and principles which guided the commissioners' judgments of disciplinary affairs.

Malpractice and corruption in forestry

Rouzaud's accusatory catalogue

One of Louis Rouzaud's letters to the *Contrôle Général* was a detailed *mémoire* listing forty-eight counts of non-compliance with the 1669 *Ordonnance* or subsequent regulations, which he had observed during his spell as *maître particulier*.⁵⁴⁵ The charges were overwhelmingly directed at the *grand-maître*, Claude Anceau, and his secretary, Thimotée Boulanger, whom he considered responsible for his downfall. In this first document, Rouzaud targeted his former *maîtrise* colleagues only twice, albeit with the particularly serious allegation of "crime de faux", the falsification of official documents. He reserved his attacks on the officers for his second *mémoire*, in which he accused them of having omitted to follow up irregularities that he had reported during his time in office on fifty-five separate counts.⁵⁴⁶ Notwithstanding their partial nature as denunciations, these two documents are a useful base for establishing a typology of the behaviours and practices, which in an eighteenth-century context have been deemed serious enough to merit prosecution.

Based on Rouzaud's first *mémoire*, Table 17 summarises the charges leveled at the *grand-maître* and the officers, and the potential beneficiaries of their actions. Overall, the accusations revolved around two major areas of responsibility: matters of personnel, and wood sales.

⁵⁴⁴ Mainly: ADHG, 'Registre des arrêts de la Table de Marbre, (1689 – 1790)'; and ADAD, 63C8bis, 63C63, 63C64, 63C75, 63C76, 63C77; ADH, C1256, C1257.

⁵⁴⁵ ADH, C1255, f.250-255, 'Mémoire des contraventions à l'Ordonnance commises par le Sr Anceau, grand maître..., depuis l'année 1719'. s.d. (prob.1732). Only the most relevant thirty-five points were considered here.

⁵⁴⁶ ADH, C1257, pièce 84, 'Mémoire du nombre des procès-verbaux faits par le maître particulier et gardes ... impoursuivis par le procureur du roi, 7 aoust 1737'.

Table 17 Professional malpractice as observed by Louis Rouzaud
(Sources: ADH, C1255, ADH, C1257)

DETAILS	WHO'S ACCUSED	WHO BENEFITS	HOW OFTEN MENTIONED
Allow merchants who are relatives of officers to bid	grand-maître	merchants/officers	10/35
Allow officers related to each other to operate in the maîtrise	grand-maître	officers	3/35
Excessive reduction of fines	grand-maître	merchants	3/35
Post-auction alteration of sales contract; influencing sales modalities to favour certain merchants	grand-maître	merchants	16/35
No action taken after report of irregularity or fraud	officer	merchants/public	10/35
THE REWARD			
Explicit mention or allusion to a gift	grand-maître	grand-maître	8/35

In matters of personnel, Rouzaud accused the *grand-maître* for repeatedly ignoring prohibited bonds of parentage between officers of the same *maîtrise*. While this constituted a formal breach of rules (reiterated in successive forestry codes to prevent collusion), it was probably the weakest of Rouzaud's points. A small place like Quillan resulted inevitably in high levels of endogamy. The readiness of the monarchy to grant exceptions on kinship rules was a common occurrence among similar courts. For the *présidiaux*, Meyzie concluded to a "pratique libérale de la monarchie en la matière."⁵⁴⁷ In some cases, parentage bonds have even been considered a token of local trustworthiness, as in the case

⁵⁴⁷ Meyzie, *Les illusions perdues*, 155.

of the *lieutenant général* of the *bailli* of Mantes, mentioned by Neithard Bulst.⁵⁴⁸ In another snub to the rules, ten further points in Rouzaud's document referred to prohibited kinship bonds linking officers and wood merchants wishing to participate in wood auctions. He for example revealed that the merchants Laprade, Pinet Lapinouse and Bertrand, all relatives of the *garde-marteau* Jean-Antoine Loubet, had formed a profitable company under the alias of Sr Ticheyre de Carcassonne, and regularly appeared as bidders at the Quillan auctions.

The most frequent source of abuse mentioned in Rouzaud's list (29/35) concerned irregularities in *grand-maitre* Anceau's dealings with wood merchants, or his influencing the modalities of the auctions to favour one of them. This particular focus on commercial aspects of forestry is not surprising, given that it constituted one of the *grand-maitre*'s most important duties. He enjoyed much latitude with regard to the organisation and operation of the auctions, or the treatment of *adjudicataires*. Here too, Rouzaud's document outlines the broad range of tactics he could use, not all of them strictly within the letter of the law. He could for example determine the nature and the volume of the yearly plot to be auctioned off in a way that would favour certain bidders over others. Another stratagem was to issue post-auction ordinances, which changed the nature, composition or volume of the merchant's original contract. He could simply choose to ignore reported 'over-cuts' beyond the merchant's contracted quota, or allow the construction of additional sawmills on the river, well aware that they could also serve to mask fraud.⁵⁴⁹ According to Rouzaud, the *grand-maitre* had for example allowed a merchant to convert precious fir stands into charcoal, a tree species that was strictly reserved for large constructions or the navy. He was even accused of performing private, hence un-recorded, "ventes sous la cheminée." Undesirable reports of irregularities could also be left dormant on the *grand-maitre*'s desk, until the case fell into oblivion. If it did come to prosecution and sentencing, the fine could subsequently be moderated arbitrarily, as in one case against Henri Pinet Laprade, where the original fine of 42,000 livres was reduced to 8,000 livres. After the intervention of his secretary Boulanger, it was further reduced to 2,000 livres, the payment of which, after ten years, was still outstanding.

⁵⁴⁸ Neithard Bulst, 'Les officiers royaux en France dans la deuxième moitié du XVe siècle. Bourgeois au service de l'Etat?' in: Genêt, Lottes, *L'Etat moderne et les élites*, pp. 111-121, 114.

⁵⁴⁹ Sawmills processed timber to unrecognisable end products. Their establishment was strictly regulated.

If there is some truth in the notion of merchant favoritism, the question arises of the reward the *grand-maître* could have expected from it. In eight of twenty-five cases Rouzaud explicitly noted or hinted at a gift, alleging that “chaque ordonnance a été bien payée.”⁵⁵⁰ To obtain certain contract modifications, one day after the auction a wood merchant of Roquefeuil had presented the *grand-maître* with “deux charges de jambons, [...] et une belle peau d'ours pour couverture d'un cheval de main et deux chiens de chasse de grand prix.”⁵⁵¹ Even without such explicit references, behind all the points was the underlying assumption of a reciprocal exchange mechanism that included a ‘reward’ of some kind. As Rouzaud concluded, “tous les jugements du grand-maître s'achètent et qui n'a pas d'argent se trouve terrassé.”⁵⁵²

In his second accusatory document, Louis Rouzaud turned to a direct attack on his former *maîtrise* colleagues.⁵⁵³ It was a compilation of irregularities, mostly involving merchant fraud, wood theft or illegal livestock grazing, all instances, which had been reported but not followed up by the *procureur du Roi*. Here, Rouzaud played on an argument of ‘gross professional negligence’, detrimental to the interests of the king. This, however, proved *in fine* to be a grave miscalculation. Not only were the commissioners able to dismiss most allegations on well-founded grounds, but in the process they were alerted to other, more serious irregularities, especially concerning the undue perception of the *droits de passe*, which would also precipitate the denunciator’s own downfall.

Altogether, the nature of Rouzaud’s document as a willful denunciation might have coloured the impression of accumulated abuse, negligence and malpractice by part of the *grand-maître*. On the other hand, this document underscores the wide margin of autonomy the *grand-maître* enjoyed in ordinary forestry practice, especially when dealing with commercial aspects of his duties. Keeping wood merchants cooperating would have ensured that the proceeds from the sales were sufficient to pay the *gages* of the forestry personnel (including his own), and leave enough surpluses to show on the returns sheet sent to the crown’s treasury.

These initial accusations by a disgruntled officer contrast with the ‘counter-catalogue’ of officer malpractice compiled by the *procureur de Réformation*, Gabriel Pernet, just one

⁵⁵⁰ ADH, C1255, f.250, ‘Mémoire des contraventions’, items 4 and 5.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., item 16.

⁵⁵² Ibid., item 28.

⁵⁵³ ADH, C1257, pièce 84, ‘Mémoire du nombre des procès-verbaux..., 7 août 1737’.

year after the start of the investigations. The *procureur*'s assessment allows us to get a glimpse into official perceptions of service discipline in forestry matters. It provides insights into the way eighteenth-century officials defined the fluid boundary between the 'ideal' of administrative practice in the service of the king, and unacceptable behaviour on the ground.

The prosecutor's black list

Having examined all the reports, registers and accounts between 1721 and 1736 that he could find, *procureur* Pernet informed his superiors by way of two summarising *mémoires*. In a forty-three page report, he detailed the "contraventions et négligences des anciens et nouveaux officiers de la maîtrise de Quillan."⁵⁵⁴ The second *mémoire* was designed as a response to Rouzaud's allegations against the *grand-maître* Claude Anceau.⁵⁵⁵ The various points made by Pernet are summarised in Table 18 below.

Pernet's first mémoire: the officers

With the *procureur*'s point-by-point indictment of officer behaviour of the preceding fifteen years unfolds a familiar narrative of professional malpractice by the officers in the *maîtrises*. It was stated in the preamble of the *arrêt* that launched the *Réformation* that "partie de ces abus paroissent provenir de la negligence des officiers et gardes et de leurs intelligences avec les adjudicataires auctions et certifficateurs des ventes, ce qui tend au detriment entier des forets."⁵⁵⁶ Themes such as 'negligence', 'collusion', and multiple other forms of professional malpractice appearing in the *Réformation* dossiers, can be divided into two distinct categories, separated by the fuzzy notion of 'degree of intent'.

In many cases, it is not possible to assess the degree of intent behind the action. The numerous instances of technical or bureaucratic negligence, which would superficially be seen as careless practice, might mask the darker purpose of favouring a certain merchant for a reward. At the very least, it would have, indirectly, provided an incentive for the merchant to commit fraud. In any case, the merchant was the main beneficiary.

⁵⁵⁴ ADH, C1255, f.323-344, 'Mémoire des contraventions et négligences des anciens et nouveaux officiers ..., 15 [illegible] 1738'.

⁵⁵⁵ ADH, C1255, f.244-255, 'Mémoire des contraventions et negligences du Sr Grand-maitre de Languedoc dans les fonctions de sa charge..., 10 mars 1737'.

⁵⁵⁶ AN, E2153, f.290, 'Arrêt du 29 May 1736'.

Bureaucratic negligence could cause significant prejudice to the king's interests. It could result in substantial losses for the king by generating substantial, unrecoverable *reliquats*. Pernet was particularly alarmed at discovering that the collector of forestry fines (*garde général collecteur des amendes*) had been allowed to operate without being covered by the 400 livres caution "pour la sûreté des deniers de la collecte," as requested by the statutes. This precautionary measure also concerned bidders at the wood auctions. In theory, their contracts could only be finalised if secured by a suitable guarantor, but this requirement was rarely enforced. This could have disastrous consequences, most spectacularly in the case of Laprade's monumental (and ultimately botched) enterprise of 1723, which amounted to 129,673 livres payable in equal parts over ten years.⁵⁵⁷

In a different domain, Pernet also found fault with technical issues around the official authorisation of the cuts (*martelage en délivrance*), which was a central element of fraud control.⁵⁵⁸ In fir forests, where merchants acquired timber "*par pied d'arbre*" instead of a whole plot, the *Ordonnance* required the *garde-marteau* to select and tag the trees *before* the merchants started their felling operations. Much to his dismay, the *procureur* discovered that, in Quillan, the tagging occurred *after* the cut, which effectively gave the merchant first choice of trees. Here, Pernet blamed Froidour for having set a damaging precedent for this practice: "Monsieur de Froidour auteur du règlement en a négligé l'exécution, en procédant aux ventes sans désignation de triages, sans assiettes et sans martelage préalables; Les grands-mâîtres et officiers ont successivement suivis cet usage, parce qu'ils évitoient un travail pénible."⁵⁵⁹ This convenience shortcut, sanctioned by practice, left the king with lesser-quality stands, leading in the long run to a fast-degrading forest.

⁵⁵⁷ ADH, C1255, f.327r. and 328r., 'Mémoire des contraventions ... officiers, (1738)'; and ADH C1257, pièce 158.

⁵⁵⁸ Titre XV, article xi, specifies that trees to be offered for sale must bear the mark of the *garde-marteau*. If trees were found to have been cut by a merchant without that mark, they were considered "bois de délit".

⁵⁵⁹ ADH, C1255, f.324v., 'Mémoire des contraventions ... officiers.'

Table 18 Professional malpractice of maîtrise officers according to the list of Procureur de Réformation Pernet (1737)
(Source: ADH, C1255)

DETAILS	WHO'S IMPLICATED	HOW OFTEN MENT.	CATEGORY
Hammer used by one officer only	officer	12	Technical or bureaucratic procedures not followed
Officers related to each other allowed to work in the same maîtrise	grand-maître/ officer	3	
Administrative procedures not followed	officer	3	
Sales procedures not followed, or loosely interpreted	grand-maître/ merchant	6	
Deficient control of merchant exploitation activity	officer/ merchant	7	
Technical operations on ground not done	grand-maître/ officer/ merchant/ public	8	
Inspection visits of forests not done	officer/ merchant/ public	8	
Caution not requested	officer/ merchant	2	
Choice of trees left to the merchant	grand-maître/ officer/ merchant	2	
Timber rafts not controlled at port	officer/ merchant	2	
Reported irregularities left untreated	officer/ merchant/ public	8	
Vague accusations of technical or bureaucratic negligence		n/a	
Unallowed perception of an extra fee	grand-maître/ officer	15	Personnel matters
Forgery of official record	officer/ merchant	2	
Bureaucratic or technical manipulations to cover for merchant fraud	grand-maître/ officer/ merchant	9	Contract manipulations to favour merchants
Illegal sawmills	grand-maître/ merchant	4	
Vaguely formulated terms of contract to favour merchant	grand-maître/ merchant	1	
Allowing contracts covering several years	grand-maître/ officer/ merchant	1	
Various manipulations of contracts after the auction, to favour merchant	grand-maître/ officer/ merchant	13	

Furthermore, *martelage* operations that were performed by the *garde-marteau* alone were in principle illegal. The law demanded that he be accompanied by the *maître particulier* and the *procureur du Roy*⁵⁶⁰ to reduce opportunities for fraud. As Pernet soon picked up, year after year, *martelage* reports had been signed by only one officer. In their defense, the officers invoked the fact that this rule was unworkable. “La plupart des délivrances se faisoient par un officier en seul, ce qui n’étoit toléré par mrs les Grands-Maitres que par raport à la situation rude et montueuse de cette maîtrise, et parce qu’ils croyoient que les officiers ne pouvoient soutenir la fatigue de suivre le marteau en corps.”⁵⁶¹

What all these cases have in common is the fuzziness of the boundary between a pragmatic motive of convenience and efficiency, hardened by practice, and intentional malfeasance in connivance with the merchants whom they directly or indirectly favoured. This ambiguity made this category of offense particularly difficult to consider for prosecution. It might explain why Pernet repeatedly insisted on the primacy of law over practice. “La loy quoique négligée n’est pas moins restée dans sa vigueur. L’usage contraire est abus dont on ne peut se prévaloir parce que l’abus ne peut faire cesser la disposition de la loy.”⁵⁶² Clearly, the prosecutor’s role was not to find a feasible remedy to a problem linked to the circumstances, but to insist on professional ethos defined by strict compliance with the letter of the law.

Contrasting with these instances of ‘professional negligence’ were cases which in Pernet’s list pointed positively to intentional malpractice. Cases grouped under the label ‘contract manipulations’ were unambiguously done with the intention to favour certain merchants. As such they constituted a form of “abus de pouvoir.” Sometimes, evidence could be retrieved from the registers. The commissioners for example recognised that *martelage* records could differ, sometimes vastly, from the original sales contracts. This obvious fraud was compounded by the fact that compulsory after-exploitation inspections (*récollement*) were nearly always omitted. Large numbers of trees thus ‘disappeared’ in the commercial system, representing, here again, a substantial loss for the king.

More serious was the allegation of document falsification linked to the Laprade affair. In his initial report about this case, Pernet described at some length the details of this affair,

⁵⁶⁰ *Règlement* 6 November 1665; *arrêt du Conseil* 16 November 1688.

⁵⁶¹ ADH, C1256, pièce 49. ‘Lettre en supplique de Pierre Pinet Brezilhou à Mr. de Bernage, 27 janvier 1739.

⁵⁶² Ibid.

as far as they were known after just one year of inquiries. He strongly suspected the officers of having deliberately reduced the actual number of felled trees “grâce à une substitution de la feuille du registre par le greffier.”⁵⁶³ Given the gravity of this offense, finding a sound proof to support this claim was a priority, which occupied the commissioners and a host of experts for several years. Equally serious was the officers’ collective and abusive perception of the *droits de passe* for the verification of the rafts passing through the port. Here, Pernet denounced the “accroissement des droits à leur profit par défaut d'exercice” or their fraudulent allocation “pour un officier interdit ou décédé.”⁵⁶⁴ These maneuvers were tantamount to embezzlement. Having meticulously audited the registers, the commissioners advanced a total of 7,940 livres “indûment perçus” by all past and present officers since 1720,⁵⁶⁵ an over-perception that would have represented a substantial addition to their *gages*.

Altogether, Pernet’s catalogue was a statement of no confidence in the competence, zeal, and probity of the forestry officers. On the other hand, the accusations formulated by Rouzaud and Pernet were not new in *Réformation* history. In 1663, Colbert had already produced a similar catalogue of potential failings to advise his newly appointed commissioners on what to look for when they embarked on their mission. He particularly enjoined commissioners to examine “toutes les circonstances dans lesquelles les officiers peuvent estre d’intelligence avec les marchands pour frauder le Roy.”⁵⁶⁶ Half a century on, it appears that the stricter regime he had set up did not have much effect on entrenched routines.

Pernet’s assessment of grand-maitre misconduct

Pernet’s evaluation of the *grand-maitre*, the focus of his second *mémoire*, is far more equivocal. While the commissioners’ brief included holding all officials to account for their misdeeds or errors of judgment regardless of their *qualité*, in the “*Mémoire des contraventions et négligences du Sr Grand-maitre de Languedoc*” he sent to the *Conseil* in March 1737,⁵⁶⁷ Pernet frequently softened the blame by invoking personal - hence ‘pardonable’ - weaknesses. On a whole, the message emerging from this second document

⁵⁶³ ADH, C1255, f.330v., *Mémoire des contraventions ... officiers*’.

⁵⁶⁴ Id., f.324r.

⁵⁶⁵ ADAD, 63C64/2, f.439r. ‘Ordonnance des commissaires de réformation, 18 juillet 1744’.

⁵⁶⁶ AN, KK952, f.19, ‘*Mémoire pour la réformation*’ (1663).

⁵⁶⁷ ADH, C1255, f.244-255, ‘*Mémoire des contraventions et négligences du Sr Grand-maitre de Languedoc dans les fonctions de sa charge...*, 10 mars 1737’.

appears more confused than his assessment of the officers, including some contradicting statements. The conventional style of a legal document is interspersed with emotive outbursts. A contributing factor to these inconsistencies might have been that, despite his special powers as *procureur de Réformation*, as a ‘mere’ *procureur du Roi* of the *maîtrise particulière* of Reims, Gabriel Pernet was in a subordinate position relative to the *grand-maître*.

Pernet’s list of charges ran along twenty different “articles”. As before, its contents can be classified in terms of either ‘negligence’ or ‘intentional malpractice’, with much porosity between them. Aspects of ‘professional negligence’ appearing explicitly or implicitly in most articles formed the bulk of Pernet’s criticism. Many points simply mirrored criticisms already leveled at the officers. Anceau had for example neglected his yearly duty of inspecting personally the forests of his constituency, and failed to control the conduct of the officers adequately. He had allowed them to receive *droits de passe* without checking if the work had been done, and signed off their *certificats de service* despite being aware of this deception. “[C]e grand-maitre a donc surpris la religion du conseil [...], c’est un vol fait au Roy qui doit lui être restitué.”⁵⁶⁸ Commenting on his lack of response to a *bornage* issue, potentially an encouragement for illegal forest clearance, Pernet accused the *grand-maître* of “s’endormir sur un objet si intéressant au bien du service.”⁵⁶⁹ Anceau was especially blamed for his management of the wood sales. Throughout his long tenure, he had consistently allowed auctions to go ahead without the statutory pre-sale delimitation of the plots (*assiette*), which in effect handed over control to the merchants. He was especially reproached a serious lack of judgment for having allowed multi-year sales “pour faire plaisir à qui on vouloit,”⁵⁷⁰ a familiar hint at his pro-merchant bias.

Pernet underlined Anceau’s deliberate manipulations of the sales modalities in favour of prominent merchants such as Espezel or Laprade. According to the *vox populi*, he stated, “le sieur *grand-maître* [était] gagné par Laprade,”⁵⁷¹ and to favour merchants like him, “on se réservoir adroitement les changements de clauses.”⁵⁷² These merchants easily obtained additional sawmill facilities, with potentially nefarious consequences for the forests. “Abandonner des forêts pour faire tourner continuellement deux moulins à scie qui

⁵⁶⁸ Id., item 18.

⁵⁶⁹ Id., item 13.

⁵⁷⁰ ADH, C1255, f.245v., ‘Mémoire des contraventions ... grand-maître’.

⁵⁷¹ Id., item 8 (my italics).

⁵⁷² Id., item 12.

consomment journellement six et sept arbres, c'est autoriser des dégradations de gayeté de coeur." ⁵⁷³ His partial treatment of the merchants was especially obvious in the modifications to the original sales contracts he contrived after the official end of the auction event. He had thus granted "certaines facilités" to some selected merchants. This included authorisations for more conveniently located sawmills, the easing of constraining exploitation schedules (*prorogations des délais de vidange*), or changes to the nature of the end product, such as "bois longs" changed to "rouls." ⁵⁷⁴ For Pernet, practices like these were tantamount to 'price fixing': "si pareille permission avoit été insérée dans les clauses de l'adjudication, certains marchands auroient portés la vente à plus haut prix." ⁵⁷⁵ The main rationales driving the *procureur*'s indictments were revenue losses for the king ("SM a souffert par le deffaut des ventes depuis 37 ans"), and the physical degradation of the king's forests, which, after many years of this practice, had become "totalement dégradées, defrichées et abruties." ⁵⁷⁶

Interestingly, Pernet mitigated his assault by occasionally shifting the blame away from the *grand-maître* on to minor actors, his secretary, the merchants (who will commit fraud anyway), and the officers. While Pernet thought of the multi-year sales method as a fundamentally misguided choice, he diverted his attack on to the *procureur du Roy* of the Quillan *maîtrise*, who had pressurised the *grand-maître* into allowing it. This officer, "sans estre autorisé du Conseil, s'avisa indiscrettement de presser le sieur grandmaitre et les autres officiers de vendre par avance pour nombre d'années qu'il poussa jusqu'a dix." As a result, Anceau "se presta [...] sans autorité aux remontrances de ce procureur du Roy et vendit aux choix des marchands." ⁵⁷⁷ Timothée Boulanger, the *grand-maître*'s personal secretary, was a special target of Pernet's ire. All correspondence should have been in the hands of the *greffier*: "[E]tant revêtus de la religion du serment leurs signatures sont les seules qui fassent foy en justice. Celles du secrétaire qui n'a provisions ny caractère demeurent sans foy." ⁵⁷⁸ By managing single-handedly this part of the bureaucratic process, the *secrétaire* had overstepped his rank and duty. He had exercised a dubious influence on the bureaucratic control chain, even demanding payment for it. "Tous ces

⁵⁷³ Id., item 6.

⁵⁷⁴ *Bois longs* were more difficult to transport, and were to be floated to the port to be checked, whereas the *rouls* "se transportent de nuit et se précipitent [...] aux moulins à scie; et les planches en provenants s'enlèvent par des routes écartées, en fraude des droits du Roy."

⁵⁷⁵ ADH, C1255, "Mémoire des contraventions ... grand-maître", item 5.

⁵⁷⁶ Id., item 14.

⁵⁷⁷ Id., item 13.

⁵⁷⁸ Id., item 19.

changements étoient adroitement ménagés par ce secrétaire qui avoit le bénéfice des requêtes qu'il dressoit et des gratuites ordonnances qu'il faisoit accorder.”⁵⁷⁹

Even if Pernet recognised the *grand-maître*'s share of responsibility in the malfunctioning of the institution, he invoked arguments of personal weakness and credulity presented as 'pardonable' faults. He dismissed any doubts about Anceau's personal integrity, claiming that among Rouzaud's denunciations, "il n'y en a point qui attaque sa probité, n'étant accusé d'aucunes exactions; sa confiance aveugle pour son secrétaire, et sa grande complaisance pour les officiers sont la source des désordres qu'on luy impute.”⁵⁸⁰ By contrast, Pernet comprehensively condemned the practices of the lesser actors in the forestry system, the officers and the secretary, who had authorised themselves an unacceptable margin of autonomy in the exercise of their duty. This particular bias was echoed, one month later, in the letter intendant Bernage addressed to *contrôleur général* Orry: "Il paroist en général au moins beaucoup de négligence de sa part dans les fonctions de sa charge, et de violens sujets de soupçons contre la conduite de son secrétaire.”⁵⁸¹

In sum, the *procureur de Réformation* demonstrated great zeal in his role as main investigator. Within just one year, he had established a rounded catalogue of the practices and faults that impaired the functioning of the *maîtrise*, ranked on a sliding scale from vague notions of 'professional negligence' to clearly punishable cases of embezzlement, forgery, and fraud. The preceding analysis has especially highlighted the predominance of issues pertaining to wood commerce and the complexities of its control. In addition, while the *grand-maître* was duly included in the investigations, the onus of legal responsibility rested with subordinate individuals inside the forestry system, or those closely associated with it.

With the third and final step in this analysis, our focus will shift to the judgments pronounced in the final phase of the *Réformation* process, mainly between 1739 and 1747, when the various cases brought forward by the *procureur* had been well documented and supported by a solid body of evidence. Out of the mass of judgments of all users and owners of the forests pronounced by the commissioners in the course of the *Réformation*, those concerning the officers represented numerically only a minor part. On the other hand, the patterns emerging from them are a good indicator of official perceptions of service

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁰ Id., item 18.

⁵⁸¹ ADH, C1255, f.192r., 'Lettre à Mr. Orry, 12 avril 1737'.

discipline in royal institutions. As France was embarking on a new costly war, this part of the analysis will help to establish how far the practices described above were considered threatening for the established order, the stability of the system, and the authority of the monarch.

The judgments

After 1742, the sources suggest a marked acceleration of legal proceedings, leading to a string of final judgments on all outstanding cases, including the Laprade affair. This acceleration coincided with the personnel changes in the commissioners' team mentioned above. Most of the final judgments were found in the registers housed at the *Archives Départementales de l'Aude* in Carcassonne, while some of the corresponding dossiers were spread between Carcassonne and the *Archives Départementales* in Montpellier. (Table 19)

Certain patterns and trends emerge from analysing the judgments meted out at forestry personnel. Firstly, no mention could be found in our sources of any sentence against *grand-maître* Claude Anceau, despite his activities and failings having been pointedly and repeatedly denounced. Nor did his name appear in the special register "Arrêts et Jugements" of the *Table de Marbre*, located at the *Archives Départementales* in Toulouse. In his thorough account of the Anceau family, Coincy did not mention any significant trouble around that time, even though he had access to their private archives at the Lavelanet castle.⁵⁸² Claude Anceau's death at the start of the proceedings might have 'conveniently' averted an embarrassing fallout on the general image of the forestry elites, and specifically on his son, his successor in the office of *grand-maître* of Toulouse and a prominent member of the *Réformation* team. Ultimately, the lack of mention of any judgment on the *grand-maître* contrasts sharply with the heavy-handed treatment of this category of foresters by Colbert's *Réformation* judges. There, the two *grands-mâîtres* of Isle-de-France, de Candé and de Cartigny, had been fined 82,500 livres each. In Languedoc, Jehan Caulet de Cadars and Jehan de Fottes had both been suspended for two years and sentenced to respectively 8,000 and 6,000 livres.⁵⁸³ In Poitou, *grand-maître* Jean-Baptiste Joulard, sieur d'Airon, had not only been fined and removed, but he also

⁵⁸² Coincy, 'Quelques précisions'.

⁵⁸³ ADHG, 1A12, vol.1, f.107r.-143v.; and f. 145r.-180r., 'Jugement du Sr grand-maître Caulet de Cadars'; 'Jugement du Sr grand-maître de Flottes'.

suffered the public humiliation of having to submit to the infamous “amende honorable.”

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*Table 19 Second Réformation of Quillan: The judgments
(1739-1745)*

CHARGE	DEFENDANTS	PROFESSIONAL CATEGORY	SENTENCE
Abuse of office for fraudulent cut	Antoinette Pepratx	owner of maîtrise office	1,580 livres fine and restitution
Abuse of office for fraudulent cut	Bernard Pepratx	wood merchant	320 livres fine and restitution
Rental 'arrears' (36 years)	Antoinette Pepratx	owner of maîtrise office	1,900 livres repayment for 36 years rental 'arrears'
Rental 'arrears' (3 years)	Pierre Marsol	maîtrise officer	175 livres repayment for 3 years rental 'arrears'
Reliquat	Lucet	fine collector	prison until total reliquat recovered
Misuse of tagging hammer	Terrisse, Loubet, Roillet	maîtrise officers	acquitted
Reports of irregularities left unprosecuted	Rouzaud, Jaubert, Terrisse, Loubet, Roillet	maîtrise officers	Terrisse to finish case; others acquitted
Suspicion of intentional incorrect tagging to favour a fraudulent merchant	Terrisse, Loubet	maîtrise officers	acquitted because evidence "too ambiguous to risk a costly investigation"
Undue perception of <i>droits de passe</i> (calculated at 9,537 livres)	Antoinette Pepratx, Joseph Rouzaud Morency, Pierre Pinet Bresillou, André Boire, Louis Rouzaud, Pierre Marsol, Louis Jaubert, Louis Terrisse, Antoine Loubet, Jean Roillet	maîtrise officers	900 livres collective fine; Roillet acquitted
Connivance with fraudulent merchant	Claude amiel; Joseph Rouzaud Morency, Pierre Pinet Brezilhou, Jean Roillet	wood merchant; maîtrise officers	Merchant Amiel 1,000 livres fine and restitution; Rouzaud Morency and Pinet Brezilhou 200 livres fine (together); Roillet acquitted
Abuse of office to favour fraudulent merchant; and Forgery and alteration of official document	Rouzaud, Roillet, Loubet, Terrisse	maîtrise officers	Rouzaud 3,000 livres fine; Roillet 3,000 livres fine and suspended one year; Loubet: suspended one year; Terrisse acquitted

⁵⁸⁴ Devèze, *Une admirable réforme*, 122; 135.

With regard to the officers, very few instances of the ‘negligent’ category highlighted in Rouzaud and Pernet’s catalogues made it to a final judgment. Rouzaud’s claims were not considered as acceptable evidence because the original document was unsigned, even though he eventually conceded its authorship. Similarly, most of the fifty points included in his “procès-verbaux impoursuivis” did not withstand scrutiny and were rejected as unfounded. *Procureur* Louis Terrisse was only enjoined to pursue a small number of unfinished cases within a given time limit.⁵⁸⁵ *Maître particulier* Pierre Marsol, who had omitted to pursue and fine a fraudulent *adjudicataire*, was sentenced to a restitution of 960 livres.⁵⁸⁶ While collusion between officers and merchants had been denounced time and again, at sentencing stage most of these cases dwindled into insignificance. In one instance of mismatch between *martelage* and register entries, the judges simply ruled that the “contraventions prétendues étaient trop équivoques pour hasarder une information coûteuse.”⁵⁸⁷ Even the unduly perceived *droits de passe*, which had cost so much time and ink, produced a surprisingly moderate fine. For the 7,940 livres overpaid rights advanced by Pernet, the fine amounted to a mere 900 livres, moreover to be paid collectively in proportion of each officer’s specific allowance and time in office. *Greffier* Roillet, the officer formally responsible for recording and collecting these rights, was acquitted.⁵⁸⁸

A more severe sentence was pronounced on the charge of forgery, in conjunction with the Laprade affair. Since Colbert, the protection of registers and official papers had become a symbol of improved bureaucratic control by the monarchical administration, and one might have expected a heightened sensitivity towards irregularities in that domain. The forgery allegation certainly attracted a great deal of attention. The bulk of the inquiries and proceedings included multiple hearings, confrontations in court, complemented by the costly and repeated involvement of outside experts to find corroborating evidence. After eight years of investigations, the case narrowed down to establishing the responsibility of the four officers in post at the time, including Louis Rouzaud. In February 1744, Rouzaud and the *greffier*, Jean Roillet, were sentenced “à être pris et saisis au corps, menés dans les prisons du présidial [of Montpellier] pour être interrogés.”⁵⁸⁹ Jean-Antoine Loubet and Louis Terrisse too were summoned. While Roillet handed himself over voluntarily to face further hearings and confrontations, Rouzaud did not wait for his summons to abscond

⁵⁸⁵ ADAD, 63C64, ‘Jugement, 30 juin 1741’.

⁵⁸⁶ ADAD, 63C63/1, ‘Jugement, 6 septembre 1746’.

⁵⁸⁷ ADAD, 63C64, ‘Jugement, 30 juin 1741’.

⁵⁸⁸ ADAD, 63C77, ‘Jugement, 18 juillet 1744’.

⁵⁸⁹ ADAD, 63C77, ‘Jugement, 15 février 1744’.

from the region. Final judgment on this complex affair was pronounced on 8 July 1744. For the “indues délivrances” they had made to Laprade, and for their participation in the substitution of the page in the register, Louis Rouzaud was condemned (in absentia) to a fine of 3,000 livres and banishment from the *maîtrise* district. *Greffier* Roillet was deposed for one year, and was to remain in jail until payment of his fine of 3,000 livres.⁵⁹⁰ The commissioner declared that “s’il échappa à la peine de faussaires, ce fut parce que les preuves résultantes d’une information par l’expert en fait de faux sont conjecturalles, et n’ont pas la même force que des preuves évidentes auxquelles les juges ne peuvent pas se refuser.”⁵⁹¹ *Garde-marteau* Loubet was deposed for one year. *Procureur* Terrisse was acquitted altogether.⁵⁹² For his part in the affair, Henri Laprade, the insolvent merchant whose role in the forgery affair could never be convincingly established, was freed of further court proceedings, pending repayment of a fraction of the outstanding debt on his contract.⁵⁹³

Cases of collusion between officers and merchants, like the Laprade affair, posed a particular conundrum for the judges. Their assessment of the two ‘partners in crime’ rested on a subjective perception of their respective roles, which forced them weigh up two conflicting rationales: insist on internal discipline to maintain the credibility of the royal institution, or exercise political prudence towards merchants seen as members of a useful, coopted commercial task force. Favourable treatment of wood merchants had already been a feature of *Réformation* policy under Colbert, who, in 1663, advised the commissioners to use wood merchants to elicit denunciations of the “mauvais officiers,” while reassuring them that “ce n’est point eux que la Réformation attaque, mais bien les officiers ausquels le Roy à confié la conservation de son Domaine.”⁵⁹⁴

A similar bias seemed to animate eighteenth-century *grands-mâîtres* and *Réformation* judges in their treatment of prominent cases of merchant fraud. In 1732, Claude Anceau pronounced a fine of 20,000 livres against Claude Amiel for having committed fraud in a royal forest on a particularly massive scale, but after appeal, the fine was reduced to a mere 1,000 livres on the grounds of insufficient evidence.⁵⁹⁵ The Etienne Espezel affair was a

⁵⁹⁰ ADH, C1903, pièce 44, ‘Lettre (probably by Bernage), s.d. but around July 1744’.

⁵⁹¹ ADH, C1903, pièce 49, ‘Mémoire et Avis au sujet de l’amende du greffier... Roillet pour être déchargé d’une amende de 3,000 livres...’, (prob. from Le Nain), 2 novembre 1744’.

⁵⁹² ADAD, 63C77, ‘Ordonnance des commissaires de réformation, 8 juin 1744’.

⁵⁹³ See above p.197.

⁵⁹⁴ AN, KK952, f.23-24, ‘Mémoire pour la réformation’ (1663).

⁵⁹⁵ ADAD, 63C77, ‘Jugement Claude Amiel, 19 aoust 1744’.

particularly high-profile *Réformation* case, which, like the Laprade affair, lasted nearly a decade and required the services of outside experts.⁵⁹⁶ At each stage of the process the merchant fought back vigorously, supported by legal expertise from within his family. To buttress his defense, he used a judicial *factum* printed at his own cost. While he was eventually found guilty, his fine of 3,417 livres was vastly disproportionate to the scale of the fraud, and to his substantial financial capabilities.⁵⁹⁷

Why this lenient treatment? Merchants like Amiel, Espezel and Laprade were needed as essential commercial operators, especially at a time when Languedoc developed its manufacturing potential, mostly in the textile and glass-making sectors – both great consumers of firewood. They provided the whole region with wood in all its various forms: charcoal, timber for large constructions, smaller buildings, domestic fuel, and accessorially tar and resin for shipbuilding, or ash for soda manufacturing. Most importantly, they guaranteed the provision of the various woods needed for the country's navy and military. In the regional supply-demand system, the *grand-maitre* determined the offer, but the merchant determined the demand. By evaluating the fluctuations of the regional markets down the line, he could impose limits on prices, or even refuse to bid. They also played a crucial role in the commercialisation of communal woods and the conflicts generated by the claims of local seigneurs over them.⁵⁹⁸ Especially where the stakes were high, as with the supply of Paris or other regional capitals, their powerful lobbies could exert leverage on prices and influence policies.⁵⁹⁹ In Toulouse, the *Corporation des marchands de bois de Toulouse* defended their interests.⁶⁰⁰ Antagonising these powerful commercial agents was not in the interest of a government intent on supporting commerce.

Another significant observation emerging from the judgments is the apparent lack of concern with the aspect of gift-exchange. In earlier centuries, the oath sworn by the *maîtres des forêts* had included the solemn promise “de servir fidèlement le roi, d’observer les ordonnances des eaux et forêts, d’exercer son office fidèlement, *sans fraude et sans*

⁵⁹⁶ The Espezel case has been described in de Sailly, ‘Les conséquences’, although he does not provide any sources. Some elements can be found in ADAD, 63C63 and ADH, C1257, ‘Mémoire d’Estienne Espezel, probably 1740’.

⁵⁹⁷ ADAD, 63C63, pièce 61, ‘Jugement Estienne Espezel, 17 juillet 1747’.

⁵⁹⁸ See for example Andrée Corvol, ‘Forêt et communautés en basse Bourgogne au dix-huitième siècle’, *Revue Historique*, 256, 1 (519) (1976), pp. 15-26.

⁵⁹⁹ Jean Boissière, ‘Forestiers et Marchands de bois’ du Morvan à Paris’; id., ‘Exploitation et commerce’; and Poujade, *Une société marchande*, especially 88-94.

⁶⁰⁰ Some of their archives for the period can be found in ADHG, 1E 1258, 1259, 1260.

rien donner à la faveur, de rendre le compte bon et fidèle des ventes, exploits et dons.”⁶⁰¹ This ideal of virtue and justice, in practice, remained a pious hope, unable to hold sway against the tide of gift-exchanges that oiled the administrative, financial and judicial machinery of the kingdom. Even an official hailed a loyal and virtuous servant of the king such as Froidour accepted gifts during his reconnoissance tour of the Pyrénées. Based on events around 1719, one particularly telling case recounted in Rouzaud’s *mémoire* about Anceau’s misdemeanours bears testimony to the fact that exchanging gifts, favours and influence was a practice involving all parts of the local forestry system, the *grand-maître*, his secretary, wood merchants, *maîtrise* officers, municipal *consuls*, and local residents (Annexe 5). Four decades later, Louis Desjobert, who had just inherited the office of *grand-maître* of Ile-de-France, received his father’s advice: “C’est pour avoir conseillé et rendu des services particuliers à tant de personnes que j’éprouve réputation, agrément et facilités pour grands, inférieurs et tous autres de leurs états.”⁶⁰² The fact that not one of the Quillan judgments of the 1740s referred to a suspicious “don”, then, fits in well with a cultural pattern that was considered a universal and acceptable practice.

More surprising and revealing is the case of Antoinette Pepratx, which occupied the investigators for a whole decade, not least because of the widow’s desperate battle to evade, or at least reduce, some of the fine she and her son had incurred. For the *Réformation* judges, it was more than an ordinary case of criminal prosecution. It was an opportunity to plug a loophole in the law and establish clearer rules regarding the use of the *Maison Royale*.⁶⁰³ The judges declared its occupation by the Rouzaud family from 1696 until 1734 retrospectively illegal, and requested an additional 1,900 livres unpaid rent for thirty-six years occupancy (corresponding to a rental average of 54 livres/year.) This sentence was also applied to the new *maître particulier*, Pierre Marsol, who, for the same reason, was asked for 175 livres for three years’ rent.⁶⁰⁴ The judges ruled that the room on the first floor “qui a vue sur la place publique” would henceforth serve as courtroom and council chamber “avec coffres et armoires pour marteaux et pièces du greffe.” The ground floor would be used as the *maîtrise* prison and lodging for the concierge, while the upper

⁶⁰¹ Decq, *L’Administration*, t.2, 335. (My italics).

⁶⁰² Desjobert, *Un grand-maître*. (My italics).

⁶⁰³ ADAD, 63C63/1, pièce 15, ‘Affaire Vve Rouzaud, 13 mai 1739’; and pièce 16, ‘Jugement veuve Rouzeau, loyer d’une Maison Royale’.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid.

floor would be leased to the town for municipal assemblies, school activities, and its own archives.⁶⁰⁵ In this case, prosecution and policy change went hand in hand.

In sum, from Rouzaud's initial denunciations in 1732 to the final judgments of the 1740s, we have observed various facets of a contemporary narrative of 'corruption' in forestry, a broad notion that ranged from negligent pursuit of official duties to outright intentional malfeasance. It was mostly connected with financial issues of wood sales and their control. The general overtone emerging from the responses of the judges was one of leniency, in sharp contrast with official rhetoric based on Colbert's *Ordonnance*. Fraudulent merchants were spared the heavy fines that would have been proportional to the severity of their fraud and their financial capabilities. The broad palette of tactics and maneuvers used by the *grand-maître* and the officers, which were strictly speaking outside the law, incurred overall only limited punishment. Definite dismissal from office (such as *grand-maître* Froidour had applied to Jean Besset in 1677, and Claude Anceau to Louis Rouzaud in 1732) was never requested. In just two cases - for Quillan's *greffier* and the *garde-marteau* - did the judges demand a one-year suspension from office.

After the *Réformation*: what changed?

Stability over turbulence

After the commission was dissolved and the agitation had receded, a contemporary observer would have noticed little change in the composition of the *maîtrise*, or on the wood merchant scene of Quillan. Pierre Marsol, Louis Terrisse and Jean Roillet all remained in post, or soon resumed it.⁶⁰⁶ Suspended for one year, Jean-Antoine Loubet transferred his office to an ally, Jean-François Arcens, but he returned to forestry six years later when he inherited the office of *receveur particulier* from his uncle, Jean-Antoine Cachulet. After the financial predicament of merchant Henri Pinet Laprade during the 1730s, his younger brother, Claude Pinet 'Lapinouse', seigneur de Laval, emerged as the new leading figure in the Pinet clan. While the judicial *Réformation* proceedings might have been afflicting for individuals and their families, they did not affect their public image in the town. Lapinouse's role as first *consul* in 1741 indicates that the family had not lost any of their standing in municipal life, and as the son-in-law of *greffier* Jean Roillet,

⁶⁰⁵ ADAD, 63C63, 'Jugement, 25 may 1739'.

⁶⁰⁶ AN, P3411, 'Quittances des revenus casuels après l'édit de février 1745'.

he could also count on insider support in the *maîtrise*. With Claude Pinet Lapinouse, the family fortunes were set to return to their former strength. This also applies to the officers. In 1741, while the case against him was still pending, Jean-Antoine Loubet was deputed to represent Quillan at the *Etats*, held that year in Narbonne, where he journeyed together with *procureur* Louis Terrisse and merchant Lapinouse. At the height of the lawsuit against him, *greffier* Jean Roillet transferred all legal powers attached to his additional role as collector of certain forestry dues to his father-in-law, Etienne Espezel.⁶⁰⁷ The merchant, who was heavily embroiled in the *Réformation* case against him, was entrusted with collecting all outstanding debts from *adjudicataires* between 1736 and 1743. More generally, the truculence and ability to rebound demonstrated by the merchants during the *Réformation* years appeared to have consolidated their local credit, and their position as privileged partners of the state.

One can wonder, then, why the *contrôleur général* agreed to invest so much time, energy, and funds in what appears to be a series of dilatory procedures and judicial chicanes, leading to a relatively meager result. Superficially, just like the treatment of corrupt financiers by the *Chambres de Justices*, a *Réformation Forestière* was a public spectacle, which reasserted monarchical authority in the eyes of the public and enhanced their trust in the king's justice. From a macro-historical perspective, reasons for the government's lukewarm commitment could be of exogenous nature, linked to France's specific pattern of forest ownership.⁶⁰⁸ With only a contribution of 1.74 % of the total regular income of the state in 1699, forestry was, at least in financial terms, not a 'firefighting issue' for Louis-Quinzième governments, and curbing corruption within its ranks was not part of the blaze. Furthermore, these interventions also touched on political sensitivities. After centuries of regulations imposed on privately owned forests impinging on the sanctity of private property, the fear of antagonising landlords who were often influential public figures remained a powerful motive for restraint.

By focusing on *endogenous* processes, however, this study has identified political motives of a different nature, driven by a deep sense of political pragmatism, and by the need to adjust an unwieldy body of forestry law to the local circumstances. In a functionalist vein, the sentencing pattern described above could suggest that the government chose to avoid major administrative and economic disruption at the level of the region. Leaving *maîtrise*

⁶⁰⁷ ADAD, 3E13305, 'Registre notarial Me Laran, janvier 1744'.

⁶⁰⁸ See Fig. 9, p.88.

officers who were best equipped with the necessary local knowledge and experience to run the day-to-day routines, warranted the smooth functioning of the unit, regardless of the risks of fraud and ‘corruption’ it entailed. With their restricted professional ambitions and promotion opportunities, they remained bound to their provincial seats, while the social order within the forestry hierarchy was also left intact. Caught between the *grand-maître* and their own local patronage webs, *maîtrise* officers were participants - not necessarily willing ones - in a praxis that consolidated urban stability, ensured the provisioning of manufactures and towns, and kept a steady trickle of forest revenue flowing into the crown’s coffers.

A similarly functionalist rationale can be applied to the pro-merchant bias that has emerged from this study. The convergence of interests between the state and the wood merchants resulted in official indulgence towards coopted ‘allies’ in an important branch of commerce. If officers and merchants, two major pillars of the regional forestry system, were to remain operational, their actions had to be treated on an individual, case-by-case basis. This assumption of an individual, rather than structural, approach to ‘corruption’ resonates with the interpretation of Stéphane Durand who studied such cases in eighteenth-century Languedoc in the domain of ordinary, civil and criminal, justice. Recognising that neither oath of office, nor repeated legislation, nor the threat of harsh punishments, were effective anti-corruption measures, governments, he contended, were driven to imagine “sophisticated new regulations that would enable the administration to detect malversation whenever and wherever it was committed.”⁶⁰⁹

In sum, for the governments of the early decades of the eighteenth century, the multiple occurrences of non-compliance with the law were the ‘acceptable’ price to pay for keeping the whole forestry system functioning in a balanced, orderly way. This pragmatic approach is well summarised by Doyle’s statement that “it was only when practices admitted to be corrupt, but recognized as effective, ceased to be effective, that their corruptness came to seem significant.”⁶¹⁰ In this perspective, stability, not disruption, was the major rationale that underpinned eighteenth-century forestry politics.

⁶⁰⁹ Stéphane Durand, ‘Corruption and Anticorruption in France between the 1670s and the 1780s: The Example of the Provincial Administration of Languedoc’, in: Kroeze, et al., *Anticorruption*, pp. 153-166, 161.

⁶¹⁰ Doyle, ‘Changing Notions’, 87.

Réformations, an opportunity for structural change

On the other hand, the impression of ‘do-nothing policy’ that could be inferred from this functionalist interpretation is also misleading. While the 1730s *Réformation* had clearly not been a wholesale anti-corruption undertaking, it led to a fine-tuned approach to a wide range of local forestry problems that took into account underlying social and geographical realities. Based on the lessons of the Quillan operation, the *Règlement* of 1754 significantly expanded on the first *Règlement* for the district’s forests set up by Froidour on 13 December 1668.⁶¹¹ While some of the articles of the new code merely restated and reinforced old rules of practice for the personnel, the bulk addressed technical measures of management and control, designed to increase effectiveness and reduce opportunities for fraud.⁶¹²

Recognising Quillan’s situation as a river control post, *Titre VI* was entirely dedicated to the minutiae of control processes of the timber rafts passing through it. *Titre II* addressed matters of exploitation and sales. Here, the code re-affirmed the exceptional permission to sell fir trees “par pied d’arbre,” but, as a direct consequence of one of *procureur* Pernet’s criticisms, merchants could only begin harvesting *after* the officers had selected the trees. The numerous cases pertaining to local sawmills, forges and glassworks, which continued to proliferate in the region, alerted the legislator about their increasing role as facilitators of forestry fraud, and *Titre V* redefined control measures against the owners of these facilities. The sections concerned with private owners restated their obligation of “déclaration de coupe” for their high-forest trees. Customary use rights were also adjusted, but with a favourable consideration of the specific needs of mountain communities, who were particularly reliant on local wood supplies for their buildings (*Titre IV*).

These few examples show a commitment to adapt Colbert’s rigid principles to the social and physical characteristics of the district, whilst taking care not to contradict the fundamental tenets of the 1669 *Ordonnance*. The frequent use of a technical, ‘sylvicultural’ vocabulary suggests a growing interest in linking forest preservation to the

⁶¹¹ ‘Règlement provisoire... concernant la police et administration des forêts du bureau de Quillan’, in: Chabrol, ‘Histoire de la maîtrise de Quillan’, (1959), 6.

⁶¹² ADH, C1899, ‘Règlement pour la Régie, l’Administration et la Conservation des Bois & Forêts appartenant au Roi dans le Ressort de la Maîtrise Particulière de Quillan, 16 septembre 1754’.

new insights of the natural sciences. This was especially important for the region's mixed fir-and-beech stands (*hêtraies-sapinières*), which contained large reserves for regional and national needs. The importance given to these matters suggests that a more technical approach to forestry problems was starting to displace the traditional legalist stance. While the 1754 code re-affirmed the state's primary aim of preserving and managing the forests according to its own interests, it is also an example of carefully calibrated regulation apt at reconciling competing claims on a limited material resource. Most importantly, the *Règlement* endured: it was still in use in its original form by the middle of the twentieth century, sparking some commentators to quip that in Quillan, de Gaulle was keeping the promises of Louis XV.⁶¹³

This analysis of 'corruption' in forestry has demonstrated that allowing practice to supersede law, ultimately, represented more than the normalisation of unlawful behaviours by disinterested governments. It was more than a form of 'white corruption' based on the 'everybody-does-it' argument, still in use today, which made it acceptable by political elites and the wider society.⁶¹⁴ It was a praxis, which nudged lawmakers into developing a more functional legal and executive framework of forestry, better suited to tackling structural deficiencies of a rigid body of law, increasingly ill-adapted to changing norms and economic and social structures. A good illustration of this is the re-dedication of Quillan's *Maison Royale* by commissioners who had recognised that time had come to impose a physical separation between public and private use of buildings. The improvement of professional discipline was also contingent on the change of physical structures.

More fundamentally, our analysis has demonstrated a far more flexible approach to forestry politics than interpretations considering Colbert's *Ordonnance* alone have suggested. It mitigates the simple notion of 'failure' of Colbert's forestry regime at the hands of inept and 'corrupt' executors. The long string of regional *Réformations Forestières* right up to the eve of the Revolution points to the fact that, from Fleury to Calonne, *contrôleurs généraux* and ministers, keenly aware of the strategic importance of the production, distribution, and control of wood, continued to resort to region-specific solutions to forestry problems, including a certain tolerance of improprieties and non-compliance with Colbertian rules and follow-up regulations.

⁶¹³ Cited in Chabrol, 'Histoire de la maîtrise de Quillan', 11, n.1.

⁶¹⁴ A concept formulated by Arnold Heidenheimer. See for example Jones, *From virtue to venality*, 2.

CONCLUSION

Reforming forestry, a doomed initiative?

Three main features of forestry in the first half of the eighteenth century have been particularly relevant for this thesis. Firstly, despite tentative inroads in mineral coal usage and continuing timber imports from the Baltic region, the domestic production of wood promoted by Colbert was still an important strategic factor of economic development, social stability, and international prestige. Secondly, while France's forested cover might have appeared abundant at a superficial glance, two thirds of it were in private hands. A diplomatic approach was needed to induce private owners to manage their forests in accordance with principles at work in royal forests, to encourage the growth of certain species perceived as especially 'useful' for the needs of the state and for the '*bien commun*'. The third, and perhaps most relevant, aspect is the fundamentally *regional* ambit of the production, exploitation, commercialisation and distribution of wood – mainly due to the limitations of transporting bulk material. This regional factor in forestry has important implications for the socio-political dynamics that underpinned the management and control of the forests.

Access and control of the forests and their resources represented an arena for competing stakeholders - prominently among them the monarchical state – all jostling for an essential and limited resource. The confusion resulting from the clash of these interests led Bamford to conclude that “[m]any of the institutional maladies that enfeebled the Bourbon monarchy as a whole – the laxity of executive controls, the incompetence and venality of officials, and the extremes of financial confusion and pressure – concurred to weaken the effectiveness of legislation in a period when the demands on the forests greatly increased.” “Pressed by financial need,” he added, “the *contrôleurs généraux*, ostensibly the managers and protectors of the forests, were unable to control their use. Long before the end of the *Ancien Régime*, they joined the ranks of those intent on exploitation. The navy, and all other agencies, dependent on forest resources, suffered the consequences.”⁶¹⁵

Our examination of ordinary practice of forestry at the beginning of the eighteenth century has produced an explanatory framework that challenges such pessimistic views. It has

⁶¹⁵ Bamford, *Forests and French sea power*, 94.

shown that there was more to the state's approach than a narrow concern with profitability alone. There was also more to the fraudulent actions of agents like Estienne Loubet or Antoinette Pepratx than a foreordained propensity to fraud and corruption, resulting near-axiomatically from the venal status of their office. Historiographical emphasis on the Colbertian operation has obscured the complex social and institutional reality that underpinned ordinary forestry practice. Recovering this reality from the point of view of the 'actors' themselves has provided a more nuanced approach to the notion of the state's alleged failure to control and manage the forests because of the shortcomings of its 'venal-hence-corrupt' officers.

Two major conclusions can be drawn from this study. Firstly, mid-ranking forestry officers constituted a group apart within the hierarchy, uncomfortably perched between the unattainable status of *grand-maître* and a socially unacceptable alliance with the rural *gardes*. Similarly to officers of the *présidiaux* (with whom they shared a number of characteristics), they were caught inside a closely circumscribed horizon of professional possibilities, with scant access to empowering webs of patronage. Secondly, a close reading of *Réformation* material allowed us to re-examine classic views of forestry politics in the wake of Colbert's intervention, and conclude to a continuing preference for devolved form of governance in forestry. Ordinary forestry practice was largely left to a regional system of management and control in the hands of the *grand-maître*, forestry entrepreneurs, and landowning elites. The price to pay for this devolved form of forestry power and governance was a certain tolerance of collusion and abuse of office— at least so long as the financial interests of the crown and the prestige of the institution were not too seriously jeopardised.

The mid-ranking forestry office, the end of the line

In forestry, as elsewhere, the symbolic authority conferred by holding a royal office was an important aspect of career strategies, which could facilitate social advancement and professional mobility. Our case study has pointed instead to the institutional marginalisation of forestry officers, characterised by a conspicuous absence of official recognition, adequate financial rewards for their service, and scant effective support in their professional duties. While the evolution of office values beyond the 1730s could not be ascertained, it is unlikely that they substantially increased towards the end of the century. Being of little speculative value, they remained within the same local forestry

dynasties until the Revolution. Furthermore, in an increasingly saturated market of mid-ranking legal offices, their narrow specialism impeded a move towards other career paths within the judiciary. A shift to other *maitrises particulières* was also unlikely as, there too, posts were the jealous preserve of local families. Their local knowledge and the technical know-how acquired through longstanding familial transmission made these officers best suited to control the forests in their own district. There was also no sign that they attempted to access posts in the military, the Church, or the university.

Even more inauspicious were their chances of reaching up to the next rung in the forestry ladder. In terms of prestige, social status and wealth, a gulf separated them from the *grand-maître*. Not even the *maître particulier*, despite the traditional association of this office with the old nobility, could ever envisage this leap upwards. Their professional dependency on the regional *grand-maître*, and the disciplinary powers he held over them, meant that they must strive to remain in good terms with him, or that irregularities and conflicts had to be kept out of his sight. In case of hardship, the personal dimension of this relationship became even more crucial. Altogether, intermediate forestry officers appeared unable to access networks that could have provided them with more effective pathways for social and professional advancement.

Their personal and emotional insertion in the town provided them with an alternative. The seats of many of the kingdom's *maitrises* were situated in small places, poorly equipped with institutional infrastructures. Their multiple and longstanding connections with other members of local elites anchored forestry officers solidly in their native urban environment and allowed them to access resources located in local governance. On the other hand, they also locked them into other forms of dependency. Bonds of kinship, or other forms of personal associations and economic interactions, connected them with the economically most dynamic and influential segments of the local society. Forestry 'actors' (such as the archbishop of Narbonne as overlord of the town), local forestry entrepreneurs and noble forest owners formed a cohesive system centred on forestry interests that drew its strength from the social, economic and political opportunities it offered each of its members. Based on reciprocity, this system contained however an element of asymmetry between dominant and dependent members, conducive to professional misconduct: the inclusion of forestry officers in this symbiotic system allowed them to maintain the level of wealth and conspicuous lifestyle expected from them as members of the urban bourgeoisie, but it also entailed the use and abuse of the duties and rights associated with their office. Firmly kept

in a subordinate place, and little supported by the forestry authorities, provincial mid-ranking officers were denied the necessary moral authority that could have lifted them out of the dependency on their dominant counterparts. By ignoring the need to rehabilitate this component of the office hierarchy, the apparent failure to reform forestry along the Colbertian model was, in this sense, of the government's own making.

Next to underscoring the distinctive nature and lack of perspective of the mid-ranking forestry office, this study has also provided insights into the political rationales that underlay eighteenth-century *Réformations Forestières*. Examination of their judicial leg has revealed the 'provincialisation' of forestry politics, quite at odds with the centralising, modernising stance posited by historians narrowly focused on Colbert's reforms alone.

Devolved forestry governance

With the rigid principles enshrined in his *Ordonnance* of 1669, Colbert instituted an authoritative grid of reference, which, formally, remained the gold standard of forestry practice until the Revolution, and even beyond. The success of his rational, standardising approach to the management of the forests has long attracted the attention of forestry historians. By prioritising the Colbertian operation over less spectacular subsequent interventions, *Réformations Forestières* were conceptualised as key components of a centralising, modernising state. Consequently, and logically, the mismanagement of provincial forests has been attributed to infancy problems of a budding forestry bureaucracy, whose efficacy was undermined by its failure to control privilege and corruption. From a revisionist perspective, this assumption was a paradox. Pre-modern societies could *not* be bureaucratic because they continued to be "bounded by notions of patronage, hierarchy, corporatism, privilege and honour."⁶¹⁶ In forestry too, as our case study amply confirmed, most formal processes of eighteenth-century forestry were still driven by face-to-face interactions.

This argument has important interpretive consequences. After Colbert, governments were faced with the fundamental paradox of demanding strict implementation of regulations in an institutional context that continued to be driven by personal values and emotions. In practice, forestry was caught in a web of systemic inconsistencies, which ultimately

⁶¹⁶ Campbell, *Power and Politics*, 21.

generated an apparently intractable mixture of administrative inefficiency and ‘corruption’. This prevented Colbert’s rigid forestry system from developing in a flexible, organic way. A good illustration of this paradox is the persistence of legal prescriptions rooted in Colbert’s naval programme well after autarky in the provisioning of arsenal woods was abandoned. In the long term, Colbert’s hope for reaching self-sufficiency proved illusory in terms of both, quantity and quality of the material. Masts of lesser quality and size reduced the fighting potential of France’s war ships, most dramatically in the battle of La Hougue in 1692.⁶¹⁷ These difficulties, compounded by ongoing mistrust between the departments of Forestry and Navy, brought about a swift return to former trading connections. By 1784, importation of arsenal wood ranged from Mediterranean European countries and the Ottoman Empire to Holland, Denmark, German, Polish and Hanseatic towns in the north.⁶¹⁸ Paradoxically, Colbert’s regulative provisions to achieve autarky, however, remained in force.

This study has demonstrated that fraud and ‘corruption’, which continued to be a pervasive feature of eighteenth-century forestry, is a phenomenon that cannot be interpreted as a straightforward failure of the regime established by Colbert. What emerged instead was the existence of a compromise regime, based on a pragmatic approach by governments attempting to reconcile the systemic inconsistencies introduced by the Colbertian reforms. Colbert’s intervention had been an integral part of a powerful political drive to assert the authority of a young king in a ‘prestigious’ and useful part of the administrative apparatus. His most innovative policy decision had been to promote domestic wood production as part of his ‘mercantilist’ approach to political economy, leading to sweeping administrative and legal reforms. He was successful in achieving critical advances in terms of knowledge of France’s forests, metrological uniformisation, harmonisation of technical procedures. He also streamlined a dangerously overgrown personnel structure. With his 1669 *Ordonnance*, he established a legal frame of reference applicable at national level. Developments after 1715 demonstrate, however, that Colbert’s reforms had been a forceful, but brief, window of opportunity for establishing a forestry regime applicable to a vast, diverse and evolving kingdom. Operational principles, which had crystalised into unassailable tenets, collided in practice with the herculean challenges of being successfully

⁶¹⁷ See Bamford, *Forests and French sea power*. Also H.M. Scott, The Importance of Bourbon naval reconstruction to the strategy of Choiseul after the Seven Years' War, *The International History Review*, 1, 1 (1979), pp. 17-35.

⁶¹⁸ AN, MAR D3,16, ‘Balance du Commerce, Relevé des Bois de construction en planches, avirons, et Sapins, Importés pendant les années 1782, 1784’.

applied to social and natural contexts as different as those of Artois, Bretagne, Guyenne, or the Pyrénées.

The pragmatic, non-ideological, stance of subsequent governments suggests that, in order to deal with such problems, they favoured a decentralised, *regional* approach to ordinary forestry problems, under the aegis of the regional *grand-maître*. With his wide discretionary powers, he could adapt the less workable parts of Colbert's code to the circumstances, and adopt a case-by-case approach that took local or regional specificities and sensitivities into account. On the other hand, links of clientage connecting the *grand-maître* with members of the circles close to the king (illustrated by Froidour's close connection to Colbert) counterbalanced his freedom of action and ensured a measure of control from above. Crucially, the policy of decoupling central and regional decision-making managed to leave untouched a historic, central body of law, closely associated with the authority and glory of the king, while, in practice, its least workable parts could be adapted to local circumstances. The price to pay for this devolved approach was a certain tolerance of day-to-day administrative malpractice. Eighteenth-century *Réformations Forestières*, therefore, must be seen as conceptually distinct from their precursor operation of the 1660s and 1670s. Although both share the same name, they should be studied as distinct operations, each on their own terms and merits.

The fact that governments continued to resort to this kind of regional adjustments until the Revolution signals that this devolved forestry regime was endowed with a high degree of 'integrity' in the meaning given in ecological scholarship, but applied here in a wider political sense.⁶¹⁹ A similar interpretation also emerges from a recent collection of essays on the ecological theme of 'sustainability' in historical perspective. In his contribution regarding Froidour's intervention in Languedoc from the perspective of woodland preservation, Sébastien Poublanc concluded that "[A]chieving the objectives of the state required walking a fine line between coercive management and respecting regional practices."⁶²⁰ For this author, the persistence of the regional outlook was deeply rooted in medieval social and administrative structures. In this sense, Louis XV's governments, far

⁶¹⁹ In the words of environmental historian Paul Warde, a system exhibits integrity if, "when subjected to disturbance, it sustains an organizing, self-correcting capability to recover toward an end-state that is normal and "good" for that system. Paul Warde, *Ecology, Economy and State Formation in Early modern Germany* (Cambridge, 2006), 13.

⁶²⁰ Abigail P. Dowling, Richard Keyser, eds., *Conservation's Roots: Managing for Sustainability in Pre-industrial Europe, 1100-1800* (New York, 2020), 248.

from seeking a fundamental reform in forestry matters, remained loyal to centuries-old practices in forestry governance.

Devolution in forestry empowered not just the *grand-maître*. It also incorporated the wider regional system of wood merchants and influential members of forest-owning elites described above. This resonates with Roger Mettam's view that Louis XIV's dominant interest in maintaining authority, pursuing international glory and directing military operations rooted in a belief that provincial society could largely "take care of itself."⁶²¹ With this approach, Mettam contended, the crown could exploit the bureaucratic experience of hereditary office-holders without having to confront the interests of powerful social and institutional elites. By relying on existing power structures, monarchical governments could work within the constraints of a hierarchical and aristocratically dominated society, use influential families and reduce the influence of obstructive ones.⁶²² Similarly in forestry, a self-regulating regional system could handle contestations and negotiations more effectively than royal *diktats*. With forestry politics of the first half of the eighteenth century, we are far from the notion of a public service operated by new-age *commis* of a depersonalised, highly-centralised administrative system, "pensionnés par l'Etat car dévoués mais sans fortune", new pillars of a modern administrative apparatus designed to operate "presque indépendamment des hommes qui la peuplèrent."⁶²³ When *Réformations* were instigated, the commotion they created locally reaffirmed in the public eye the presence of royal authority as arbiter in regional forestry problems. Behind the scenes however, the judgments were carefully calibrated to maintain the regional system broadly balanced. This demanded a commensurate response to cases of fraud, negligence, 'corruption', collusion, or abuse of office, leveled at those perceived as the custodians of the status quo.

Preference for devolved forestry governance does not mean, however, that the central authorities had become entirely disconnected from forestry politics. The *intendants des finances* and *contrôleurs généraux* advising the *Conseil* were not just rubber-stamping instances for suggestions and *mémoires* sent by the *grands-maîtres*, auditors of yearly *états des bois*, or arbiters of the occasional high-profile disciplinary case.⁶²⁴ Throughout the

⁶²¹ Mettam, *Power and faction*, 8.

⁶²² *Id.*, 10.

⁶²³ Lucien Bély, dir., *Dictionnaire de l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1996), article 'administration'.

⁶²⁴ On work relations between the *grands-maîtres* and the *Conseil*, see Waquet, *Les Grands Maîtres*, 189-195.

eighteenth century, the *Conseil* went on deciding over important, strategic questions that could affect the country as a whole. In the economic domain, it promoted the use of mineral coal,⁶²⁵ and adjusted regulations concerning fuel wood provision and the localisation of key manufactures such as forges and glassworks. The most far-reaching policy decision, on a par with Colbert's autarky policy, – and in complete opposition to its main underlying principle of forest preservation – was official encouragement to clear private forests. With their edict of 5 July 1770, *contrôleurs généraux* imbued with physiocratic ideas offered an exemption from all taxes for fifteen years to forest owners who had cleared land to make space for cereal cultivation. While the consequences of this abrupt change of policy have not yet been fully understood, it is widely considered to be one of the main causes of the wood crisis and price increase of the pre-revolutionary years.

The two main results of this study –the intermediate forestry office as a dead-end for social advancement, and the devolution of forestry powers as a pragmatic response to an overly rigid body of law – have paved the way for future research on forestry politics. Exploring ordinary forestry practice during the final decades of the old regime through the lens of provincial *Réformations Forestières* can shed light on fundamental re-orientations in this part of monarchical administration. It can provide precious insights into changing perceptions of the paradigmatic role of the state in controlling and managing a limited material resource, in the face of fast-changing social values and norms, and increasing pressure from the 'public opinion'. One hundred years after Colbert's reforms, as ardent reformers increasingly challenged the principle of state monopoly over the management and control of France's forests, the question must be asked of the timing, trigger, deeper causes, and consequences, of the changes, which were likely to upset the compromise status-quo that I have described. How did the system of decentralised forestry practice, which had so long been quietly teetering on the margins of legality, respond to the whirl of new interests and challenges emerging after the Seven Year's war: acceleration of population growth and industrialisation, rise of urban luxury consumption and industrial needs, and, above all, calls by Louis XV's minister Choiseul to revamp France's navy in preparation for new conflict with Great Britain? A micro-historical approach into the lives and professional conduct of *maîtrise* officers solidly rooted in their local, social and cultural environments when the institution collapsed, can also bear testimony to the vast political and societal tensions and shifts that drove governmental forestry policies

⁶²⁵ Under the influence of engineer Daniel-Charles Trudaine, *contrôleur général* Orry encouraged the use of mineral coal with the arrêt of 14 January 1744. See for example Marcel Rouff, *Les mines de charbon en France au XVIIIe siècle, 1744-1791* (Paris, 1922).

throughout the long century after Colbert's reforms. This could constitute a rewarding topic for further research.

Annexe 1

Position of the ‘Grand-Maître enquêteur et général réformateur’ and the ‘maître particulier des Eaux et Forêts’ in Charles Figon’s *L’Arbre des Estats et Offices de France* (1579)



Source: Charles de Figon (Conseiller du Roy, & maistre ordinaire en la chambre des Comptes, Montpellier), *Discours des États et Offices tant du gouvernement que de la justice et des finances de France*,... (Paris, chez Guillaume d'Avray, 1579).
 Reproduced in Emmanuel Leroy Ladurie, *L'État royal*, t.1, 1460-1610, (Paris, 1987), 246.

Annexe 2

Personnel of the maîtrise particulière of Quillan between 1644 and 1790

	MAITRE PARTICULIER	LIEUTENANT	PROCUREUR DU ROI	GARDE- MARTEAU	GREFFIER	RECEVEUR PARTICULIER
pre- 1661	n/a	PIERRE BESSET	PIERRE GERMAIN	JEAN CACHULET	n/a	n/a
1652		LP 1 mars 1644	LP 1645	LP 1647		
1655				PIERRE CACHULET	BAUX, ARTHOSOUL, BONNAURE	
1661				LP 24 mai 1655	commissioned	
1662						
1663						
1664						
1665						
1666						
1667						
1668	FRANCOIS DE ROUX commissioned					
1669						
1670						
1671						
1672						
1673			PIERRE BONNAURE substitut			
1674						
1675		JEAN BESSET DE GARARD	ANTOINE CACHULET LP 5 dec. 1675			
1676		LP 27 avril 1676	JEAN-FRANCOIS MALLEVILLE	ANTOINE CACHULET		
1677	JEAN GASSE DE CONTIGNY		LP 29 fev. 1676	LP 7 mars 1675	PIERRE MALLEVILLE	
1678	LP 14 janv 1677				commissioned	
1679						
1680						
1681		GUILLAUME 1 JAUBERT				
1682		LP 14 juin 1682				
1683						
1684						

1685				JEAN DORDET	
1686		FRANCOIS BESSET DE GARARD		LP 9 mai 1685 (owner of office might have been F.P. Roillet?)	
1687		GABRIEL CHARPENTIER			
1688		LP 30 juin 1687			
1689					
1690		FRANCOIS BESSET DE GARARD			
1691		LP 31 mai 1690			
1692					
1693					
1694					
1695					
1696	JEAN ROUZAUD				
1697	TM 15 mars 1696				
1698					
1699					
1700			PIERRE PINET DE BREZILHOU		
1701			LP 31 août 1700		JEAN-PIERRE PINET LAPRADE LP 1701
1702					
1703					
1704					
1705					
1706					
1707					
1708				ESTIENNE LOUBET	
1709					
1710				LP 21 mai 1708	
1711					JEAN-ANTOINE CACHULET LP 5 déc. 1711
1712					
1713					
1714					
1715					
1716					
1717		office revenu vacant en parties casuelles		JEAN ROILLET	
1718				LP 21 aout 1717	

1719	JOSEPH ROUZAUD DE MORENCY	ANDRÉ BOIRE				
1720	nominated as interim maitre particulier 15 sept. 1719	LP 13 janv. 1719				
1721						
1722						
1723				JEAN-ANTOINE CACHULET		
1724		JEAN-LOUIS JAUBERT				
1725		LP 31 mars 1724		LP 16 juin 1723		
1726						
1727			LOUIS TERRISSE			
1728	LOUIS ROUZAUD		LP 9 janv 1727	JEAN-ANTOINE LOUBET		
1729	LP 9 juillet 1728			LP 26 mai 1728		
1730						THIMOLEON CACHULET
1731						LP ?
1732						
1733						
1734	PIERRE MARSOL					
1735	LP 29 mars 1734					
1736						
1737						
1738						
1739						
1740						
1741						
1742						
1743						
1744						
1745						
1746						
1747						
1748				JEAN FRANÇOIS ARCENS		
1749				LP around 1747?		
1750						
1751						
1752						JEAN-ANTOINE LOUBET
1753		GUILLAUME 2 JAUBERT, sgnr de Saint Joulia				TM 13 juin 1752
1754						
1755		LP around 1752?				

1756					
1757				CLAUDE LOUBET	
1758				TM 16 nov 1757	
1759					
1760					
1761					
1762	PIERRE FRANCOIS XAVIER MARSOL				
1763	TM 30 mai 1761				
1764					
1765					
1766					
1767	JEAN FRANÇOIS MARSOL			ETIENNE ALPHONSE LOUBET, sgnr de Saury	MICHEL ROILLET
1768	TM 16 sept. 1766				LP around 1767?
1769			GUILLAUME AUGUSTIN MALROC TM juillet 1769	TM 16 mars 1767	
1770					
1771					
1772					
1773					
1774					
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1789					
1790					

Annexe 3

Corpus Overview

	NAME	OFFICE CATEGORY	TENURE PERIOD	STATUS	HOW ACQUIRED
1	François de Roux	maître particulier	1668 - 1676	commission	n/a
2	Jean Gasse de Contigny	maître particulier	1677 - 1695	office	PC
3	Jean Rouzaud	maître particulier	1696 - 1719	office	*
4	Joseph Rouzaud de Morency	maître particulier (interim)	1721 - 1727	office	n/a
5	Antoinette Pepratx	owner of maître particulier office	1719 - 1727	office	*
6	Louis Rouzaud	maître particulier	1728 - 1733	office	*
7	Pierre Marsol	maître particulier	1734 - 1761	office	£
8	Pierre Besset	lieutenant	1644 - 1675	office	£ ?
9	Jean Besset de Garard	lieutenant	1673 - 1676 1676 - 1679	commission, then office	*
10	Guillaume Jaubert	lieutenant	1681 - 1686	office	£
11	Gabriel Charpentier	lieutenant	1687 - 1690	office	*
12	François Besset de Garard	lieutenant	1690 - 1716	office	*
13	André Boire	lieutenant	1719 - 1723	office	PC
14	Jean-Louis Jaubert	lieutenant	1724 - 1743	office	*
15	Jean-François Malleville	procureur du roi	1671 - 1676 1676 - 1700	commission, then office	PC
16	Pierre Pinet de Brezilhou	procureur du roi	1700 - 1726	office	*
17	Louis Terrisse	procureur du roi	1727 - 1753 (at least)	office	*
18	Pierre Cachulet	garde-marteau	1655 - 1670/74	office	*
19	Antoine Cachulet	garde-marteau	1675 - 1706	office	*
20	Etienne Loubet	garde-marteau	1708 - 1723	office	*
21	Jean-Antoine Cachulet	garde-marteau and receveur particulier	1724 - 1728	office	*
22	Jean-Antoine Loubet	garde-marteau and receveur particulier	1728 - 1745	office	*

23	Etienne Baux; Pierre Malleville	greffiers	1674 - 1684	commission	n/a
24	F.P. Roillet (with Jean Dordet)	greffier	1685- 1716	office	PC
25	Jean Roillet	greffier	1717 - prob. 1760s?	office	*
26	Jean-Pierre Pinet Laprade	receveur particulier	1701 - 1711	office (new creation)	PC
27	(Jean-Antoine Cachulet)	receveur particulier; was garde-marteau 1724-1728	1711 - 1724? 1728 - 1736	office	*
28	Thimoléon Cachulet	ment. 1744 as receveur particulier	?	office	*
29	(Jean-Antoine Loubet)	ment. 1752 as receveur particulier; was garde-marteau 1728-1745	?	office	*

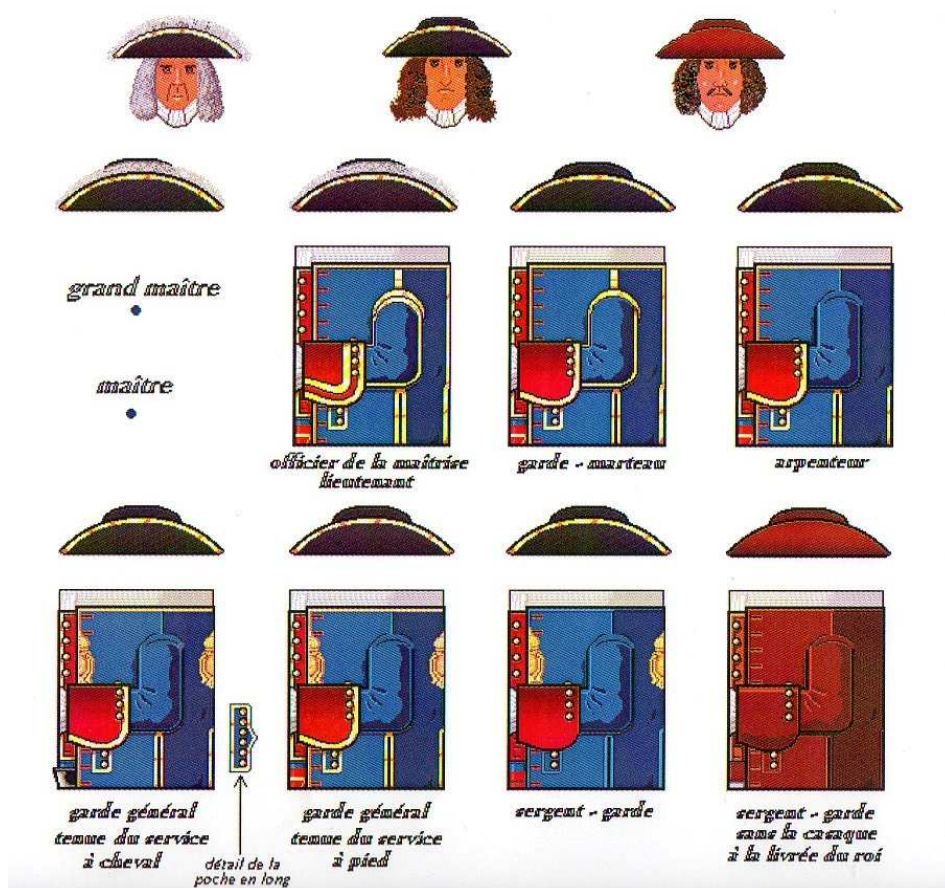
PC Acquired from the *Parties Casuelles*

* Acquired through bequest or resignation

£ Acquired privately

Annexe 4

Exemples of uniforms of maîtrise officers (1669 – 1699)



© P. Berthelot – 2008

De gauche à droite :

– Portraits de Grand-Maître, Maître ou Lieutenant de la Maîtrise — Officier — Sergent-garde .

Seconde ligne :

- Chapeau galonné d'or à large bord et plumetis, du Grand-Maître et du Maître . L'uniforme n'était généralement pas porté par ces importants personnages de la Maîtrise . Ils revêtaient d'ordinaire, de riches habits de type civil et également de longues robes noires, lors des séances de justice à la table de marbre -port de l'épée .
- Lieutenant et autres officiers de la Maîtrise . Le port de l'uniforme n'était pas systématique pour le Lieutenant . Il s'habillait dans l'autre circonstance à la manière du Grand-Maître et du Maître -ils portaient l'épée .
- Garde-Marteau -officier qui avait la responsabilité de la garde du marteau de la Maîtrise et de celui du Grand-Maître .
- Arpenteur -officier ayant la responsabilité des mesures d'arpentage en forêt .

Troisième ligne :

- Garde général -officier des gardes - avec les bottes fortes pour le service monté .
- Garde général en bas pour la tenue du service à pied, dedans et autour des bâtiments de la Maîtrise .
- Sergent-garde -service à pied -responsable de la surveillance de sa "garde forestière". Le port de deux pistolets pour sa défense, était semble-t-il, directement conditionné par l'obligation de revêtir la casaque (ou l'ample justaucorps) aux armes et à la livrée du Roi .
- Sergent-garde en tenue civile du temps, quelquefois portée à la place de la casaque royale .

(Source: Michel Bartoli, Louis de Froidour)

Annexe 5

Extract from Louis Rouzaud's *Mémoire des contraventions à l'Ordonnance commises par le sr Anceau, Grand Maître des Eaux et Forêts dans la maîtrise de Quillan, depuis l'année 1719'*

“Audites ventes de 1719 led. Grand Maitre vendit au Sr Caulet de Limoud dans le consulat de Coumus au pays de Saut une forêt entière de sapin, pour le prix de 700:£ pour la convertir en charbon; l’ordonnance deffend de charbonner le sapin, comme bois trop nécessaire a l’Etat, parce que cette qualité de bois ne revient pas sur souche.

Le lendemain de lad. adjudication, led. Caulet qui connoissoit la grande affaire qu’il venoit de faire, se rendit au lieu de Coumus en envoya tout de suite cent hommes pour abatre entierement cette forêt. Les habitants de Coumus voisins de ladite forêt qui virent avec douleur que cette foret perdrait son nom et qu’il n’y reviendrait jamais un arbre, vouloient en porter leur plainte aux Seig.rs du Conseil, ce que led. Caulet qui etoit sur les lieux evita, en faisant un pont d’argent pour les arreter, et après avoir distribué une bourse dont les Consuls eurent bonne part; il fit preparer un grand repas chez le nommé Petiton dud. lieu, ou il pria environ 30 desdits habitans des plus distingués, distribua beaucoup de vin dans le lieu, ce les rendit faisans; on estimoit alors que le Sr Caulet avoit eu au moins les arbres pour un denier pièce. La preuve de ce fait est trop eclatante pour la manquer puisquelle se justifie par les Registres des ventes qui sont au greffe de la meme Maitrise, et par la degradation entiere de cette forêt; Le Grand Maitre en reçut un present en diferentes qualités de vins, et son secretaire, outre l’expédition du contract très grassement payé, en eut un cheval harnaché qui coutoit environ 400:£, ce que personne n’ignore.”

(Source: ADH, C1255, f.250 r.)

Glossary

<i>Abus</i>	"Dérèglement, ce qui est fait contre la raison & le bon ordre" (Furetière).
<i>Acte d'émancipation</i>	Public ceremony marking the coming of age of a son or daughter, which removes them from paternal tutelage and entails their own legal responsibility.
<i>Adjudicataire</i>	Bidder at the wood auction who won an item.
<i>Adjudication</i>	Wood auction held each autumn in every maîtrise particulière.
<i>Afferme</i>	Outsourcing of the collection of certain taxes or fees.
<i>Apanage</i>	Part of the royal demesne given to younger royal heirs to the throne in compensation for not claiming a share of power.
<i>Assiette</i>	Geometrical delimitation of a forest plot to be offered at the next auction.
<i>Augmentation de gages</i>	A loan imposed by the government on certain office-holders, which increased their regular income (gages). Sometimes, they guaranteed continuing enjoyment of certain rights.
<i>Bailliage</i>	Lower criminal and civil court under the Parlement (sénéchaussée in the south).
<i>Baliveaux</i>	Well-grown young trees to be reserved during a harvesting operation in short-rotation coppice woods. They were to be left to grow as high-forest timber trees.
<i>Bureau des Finances</i>	Financial sub-unit of France's généralités, charged with allocating and collecting tax in the provinces which did not have Etats.
<i>Capitaine forestier</i>	Officers formally responsible for controlling the work of the gardes. They disappeared as an independent category after the Colbertian reforms.
<i>Chauffage</i>	Firewood destined to officers and certain individuals or institutions.

<i>Collusion</i>	"Intelligence de deux parties qui plaident en fraude d'un tiers." (Furetière).
<i>Compoix</i>	A form of cadastral record in Languedoc for taxation purposes.
<i>Concussion</i>	"Volerie, exaction faite par un Juge, par un Officier public, qui se fait payer de plus gros droits que ceux qui luy sont attribuez ; par un Receveur, qui fait payer de plus grosses taxes que celles qui luy sont deuës" (Furetière).
<i>Corruption</i>	"Action par laquelle une chose se corrompt, se change, s'altère. C'est un axiome en Philosophie, que la corruption de l'un est la generation de l'autre." (Furetière).
<i>Cour des aides</i>	Financial tribunals treating fiscal affairs, including fiscal privileges.
<i>Délit</i>	"Faute, crime leger." (Furetière).
<i>Divertissement de deniers</i>	Embezzlement.
<i>Droits de foraine</i>	Royal tax perceived on goods circulating between provinces of a different regime of aides, i.e. indirect taxes on different kinds of goods and services.
<i>Droits de passe</i>	Special fee perceived by maîtrise officers in river ports for the control of timber rafts.
Eaux-et-Forêts	"Waterways and Forests", generic name of France's forestry administration.
<i>Election</i>	Financial sub-unit in the 'Pays d'Elections', subordinated to the Bureaux des Finances.
<i>Engagiste</i>	Physical or moral person who has acquired parts of the royal demesne as usufruct. As the royal demesne is in theory inalienable, the contract can always be revoked.
<i>Epices</i>	A form of financial reward for ancien régime magistrates.
<i>Exaction</i>	"Vol que fait un Officier à une partie, quand il luy fait payer des droits qui ne luy sont point deus, ou qui sont au-delà des legitimes." (Furetière).
<i>Futaie</i>	'High-Forest', trees destined to grow large, usually for buildings on land and sea.

<i>Gabelou</i>	Official charged with collecting the gabelle, the impost on salt.
<i>Gages</i>	Yearly financial reward of an office-holder.
<i>Garde</i>	Forest warden, responsible for daily policing in a specified portion of the forests.
<i>Garde-marteau</i>	The maîtrise officer custodian of the embossed tagging hammer serving as royal seal to authorise felling or mark trees to be reserved.
<i>Gazaille</i>	Leasing out of farm animals. In Languedoc, contracts with pastoral farmers particularly included driving them to highland summer pastures.
<i>Grand maître</i>	Head of the grande-maîtrise.
<i>Grande-Maîtrise</i>	One of France's eighteen to twenty regional forestry districts headed by the grand maître.
<i>Greffier</i>	Court Clerk; here clerk of the maîtrise particulière, often also a local notary.
<i>Grenier à sel</i>	Salt depot in certain généralités, staffed with officers responsible for the distribution and sale of salt.
<i>Gruerie</i>	A smaller branch of a maîtrise particulière, with reduced staff and powers, to support the work of larger districts.
<i>Herm</i>	An uncultivated, deforested piece of land.
<i>Hobereau</i>	Petty rural noble.
<i>Journées et vacations</i>	Fee perceived by maîtrise officers to compensate them for expenses incurred by duties involving travel and overnight accommodation.
<i>Juge baneret</i>	Seigneurial judge.
<i>Lettres de provision</i>	Official document that confirmed that the applicant for a venal office has been 'pourvu' because he fulfils the specific requirements of the office and has paid the corresponding fees.
<i>Lieutenant</i>	Deputy head of the maîtrise particulière.
<i>Main-morte</i>	Refers to communities such as congregations or hospitals that did not entail a transfer of property by death, and whose material possessions were subject to a specific jurisdiction.

<i>Maître Particulier</i>	Head of the maîtrise particulière.
<i>Maîtrise Particulière</i>	A sub-unit of the grande-maîtrise.
<i>Malversation</i>	"Prevarication commise en l'exercice d'une charge, d'une commission, d'un maniemment, concussion, exaction, divertissement de deniers." (Furetière).
<i>Marc d'or</i>	Fee perceived by the crown at each acquisition or transfer of office.
<i>Martelage</i>	Operation consisting of marking selected trees to delineate plots to be offered for sale.
<i>Métairie</i>	Farming method involving sharecropping, whereby the métayer cultivated the land owned by another, with whom he shared the profits.
<i>Officier moyen</i>	Mid-ranking venal officer.
<i>Paréage</i>	Joint sovereignty over a specific territory by two overlords having equal rights.
<i>Parties casuelles</i>	Bureau which collected for the crown the rights associated with acquisition or transmission of venal offices.
<i>Péculat</i>	Embezzlement; "crime de vol des deniers publics par celui qui en est l'ordonnateur, le depositaire, ou le receveur." (Furetière).
<i>Présidial</i>	Tribunal with more extended powers than the bailliage, appealing to the Parlement.
<i>Prévarication</i>	"Abus commis dans l'exercice d'une charge publique, d'une commission donnée par un particulier." (Furetière).
<i>Prévôt</i>	In general, a subaltern justice officer which could receive appeals from seigneurial judgements. The prévôt de Paris is the head of the Châtelet (centre of justice), charged with representing the king's interests in the capital.
<i>Procureur du Roi</i>	The 'king's man' in the maîtrise particulière, magistrate representing the king's interests in forestry matters.
<i>Quart-de-réserve</i>	Management rule aimed at supporting the production of construction and naval timber. It stipulated that in one-quarter of a given forest, trees could only be harvested after one-hundred years, sometimes much longer.

<i>Radelier</i>	Makers of timber rafts to be floated down on certain rivers.
<i>Receveur Particulier</i>	Treasurer of the maîtrise particulière (from 1701).
<i>Récollement</i>	Cross-checking of stumps left after the end of the tree harvest with sales registers, to control merchant fraud.
<i>Réformation Forestière</i>	Set of judicial and administrative operations initiated by the Conseil, to address a whole range of problems perceived as detrimental to the preservation of the forests.
<i>Reliquat</i>	A sum still owed by a treasurer; "le reste ou debet dont le rendant compte se trouve debiteur, toute sa despende deduite par la closture & l'arresté d'un compte." (Furetière).
<i>Table de Marbre</i>	Forestry appeal court located within a regional Parlement that received appeals from maîtrise particulières rulings.
<i>Taillis</i>	Short-rotation coppiced wood, usually to produce firewood and woods for small constructions. In the seventeenth century meaning, it specifically referred to the underwood of a mixed stand, including higher growing trees.
<i>Tire-et-Aire</i>	Harvesting method imposed by the Ordonnance: geometrical plots were to be cut in a yearly rotation, whereby each plot was to be felled sequentially, moving directly from one plot to the next, whilst preserving a fixed number of the most promising standard trees (baliveaux), and border trees (pieds corniers) for re-growth.
<i>Tutelle et Curatelle</i>	Custodial responsibilities for royal or seigneurial minors in ancien régime France.
<i>Ville de tour</i>	In some administrative districts (diocèses), several towns could rotate to attend the yearly Etats assemblies.

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